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Ballet as Liberation:

Dreams, Desire and Resistance among Urban Japanese Women

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Thesis presented to
the University of London
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
2015

Declaration for PhD thesis

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Abstract

This thesis explores how ballet, a western performing art, provides middle-class women with a sense of fulfillment and an opportunity to escape hegemonic gender ideals in Japan. In everyday situations Japanese women are expected to dedicate their time and energy to others – husbands, parents, children and workplace superiors. I argue that indulging their own personal enjoyment is not encouraged by broader society, while in the post-bubble era the expression of neoliberal and globalised individualism is recognised among younger generations. Within this context of expected behaviour, some women use and consume ballet as a tool of resistance, albeit a fragile one, against the ‘traditional’ gender norms of Japanese society.

Among anthropologists ballet is rarely a mainstream topic for analysis because it is seen as a western ‘high art’, far removed from their traditional fields of study. Therefore the following thesis offers a novel anthropological perspective on the study of ballet as performed by middle-class amateur housewives and by doing so highlights contemporary Japanese notions of gender relations and sense of embodied selfhood.

Acknowledgements

It was my long cherished dream to research ballet in an academic way because of my happy memories of dancing ballet during my childhood years in Japan. As an anthropologist, it was a great joy for me to go back to my homeland and visit my old ballet schools although my main research area focused on unfamiliar ballet studios for ethical reasons. Ballet schools, regardless of whether they are for amateur or professional dancers, remain a closed world to curious onlookers and researchers. Therefore without my old classmates, their mothers, as well as junior and senior students from my old ballet schools, I could never have obtained such rich data within the time frame of my field research. In particular, I am grateful to Shintani-san, Kaoru-san and Noriko-san, who made special efforts during my fieldwork so that I could meet, observe and interview various practitioners of ballet.

I express my deep-felt gratitude to Dr. Lola Martinez, who supervised my doctoral work at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Without her understanding and insights into ballet and her critical accompaniment through my PhD studies, this thesis would have never been completed. My special thanks also to Dr. Stephen Hughes, the Research Tutor at SOAS, for his support and understanding. I also thank Professor David Slater at Sophia University, Japan, for his help and guidance during my fieldwork and writing-up.

I would like to thank my colleagues, Dr. Emma Cook (at Hokkaido University) and Gabriel Klaeger (at Goethe University) who supported and encouraged me during my moments of doubt and struggle. I extend my thanks to Dr. George Kunnath (at University of Oxford) and Dr. Paul Hansen (at Hokkaido University) for their insightful comments on my work.

My biggest thanks are due to my parents and sister. Their kindness, endurance and understanding encouraged me towards the completion of this research. In particular, when my research visa in the UK expired and I had no choice but complete my thesis from Japan, their cooperation, support and accompaniment made my long-cherished dream come true at last. From the depth of my heart, I say thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I started dancing ballet at the age of four, when my mother took me to a local school in Yokohama called T.K. Ballet Studio. She was worried that there were not many children in my neighbourhood and thought that it would be good for me to take part in a group activity (*shūdan kōdō*) before going to nursery school.¹ At first she tried to enrol me in swimming lessons but then changed her mind to ballet, because unlike swimming, which was seen as a gender-neutral pastime, ballet was widely perceived to be a “girls’ activity.”² She also considered Japanese traditional dance (*nihonbuyō*), but from her own experience she considered the lessons to be too expensive. Furthermore since the lessons were one-on-one she thought that the main purpose of putting me in *shūdan kōdō* would not be achieved. Now if I think about those days, I would say that my mother was a very typical middle-class *kyōiku mama* (education mother). These are mothers who persuade their children into pursuing extracurricular educational and cultural activities in order to reproduce middle-class cultural capital; a point that will be frequently revisited in this thesis in examining the contemporary participation and consumption of ballet in Tokyo, Japan. It seems that my mother’s decision was the correct one in retrospect. As soon as I started dancing ballet at T.K. Ballet Studio I loved it and I was able to make many friends there. Even though I was not a particularly good dancer, as my right leg was not flexible enough to develop professional-level ballet techniques, I enjoyed dancing at T.K. Ballet Studio until I left at the age of 18. At that time, I quit dancing because I could not handle both dance and the preparation requirements for university entry exams.

¹ In the 1970s nursery school began from the age of five; this will be discussed further in Chapter 3. Learning *shūdan kōdō* begins from nursery school because it is considered to be important in Japanese society (Allison 1996b; Cave 2007; Hendry 1986), a point to which I will return to in Chapter 4.

² The number of male students is increasing recently, but it was unusual for boys to be enrolled in ballet lessons when I was young in the 1970s. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

Nevertheless, after graduating from university, I began dancing ballet again while I was working in a computer company. For the first two years, I was very busy working as a programmer. The workplace was extremely patriarchal and many female workers had problems when it came to promotion. In my case, I was assessed as a non-productive worker by a male boss and transferred from the executive to general track, becoming an Office Lady (*OL*).³ My monthly salary was cut by 20% without notice. Thus, three years into my job I became a *madogiwa zoku* (literally meaning people who work at the window, but colloquially meaning workers who are expected to leave companies). However, the upside was that my workload decreased and I did not have much to do. I wanted to do something with my new found time but did not know what. As an *OL* I could leave work at 5:30 in the evening and so I found a ballet studio near my workplace and joined the adult beginner's class. I enjoyed dancing there because I could escape from the frustration of my workplace through dancing ballet.

Through my experience of dancing ballet I developed an interest in pursuing an academic analysis of classical ballet, and I searched for relevant postgraduate courses. But to my disappointment, I discovered that there were very few institutions where I could study dance from an academic perspective. Anthropology is one of the few disciplines that analyses dance. Yet still, there is relatively little anthropological literature that discusses the anthropology of dance, let alone classical ballet. Therefore, this thesis explores an under-researched area through analysis that employs not only a dance studies' perspective, such as

³ A two-track system, executive and general, operates in most big Japanese companies. While most executive track employees are university graduates and expect to make their job a long-term career, the latter usually only undertake subordinate jobs and are not expected to continue working for more than a few years. The tracks are meant, in theory, to be gender neutral, but in practice women are the employees that usually end up working in the general track. This point will be elaborated on in Chapter 2.

the interpretation of dancers' movements and bodies, but also explores related socio-cultural aspects and their implications. In particular, I focus on ordinary Japanese people who dance ballet as a hobby. This is because the majority of anthropologists have only studied professional ballet dancers (cf. Aalten 2004; Hanna 1988; Novack 1993) and I argue that since the consumption of ballet by amateurs reflects perceptions and conditions found in broader society, ballet amateurs or hobbyists should also be seen as important subjects worthy of research. Therefore, in this thesis I examine how Japanese people consume dance in order to understand specific social forces such as a shared middle-class ethos, gender roles, and accepted behaviour patterns. I will also explore how, under such social forces, dance provides participant women with the opportunity to assert their individual identity in the context of contemporary Japan.

Finding a Methodological approach: Being a native anthropologist

As a female and as a native anthropologist, from the start I was deeply 'embedded' in my research field. Because, in Japan ballet is almost exclusively a female practice, my gender clearly helped me to access ballet classes easily. Were I a man it would have been more difficult to gain permission to observe female practitioners. Male researchers observing young girls or women would in many cases be unwelcome.⁴ I encountered three male students at the three ballet studios where I conducted fieldwork in Tokyo from October

⁴ Albeit the growing popularity among male dance practitioners has been reported in Japan as well as in other parts of the globe. For example, from Mexico to Europe there are an increasing number of articles about more male dancers. According to *The Telegraph*, as of 2012 the Royal Ballet School has enrolled more male candidates than female. For more detailed accounts, see <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1390792/More-boys-than-girls-join-the-Royal-Ballet.html>, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-28129203>, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-23680534>, accessed December 2014. In the case of Japan, there is no official number of male dancers as noted in Chapter 2, but according to the number of entrants into a dance competition entitled Prix de Lausanne, since the 1990s the number of Japanese male dancers who have received prizes has increased by 30%. Indeed, in 2014 Japanese boys got first and 6th prize in this competition. For a more detailed discussion of this competition, I will focus on it in the next chapter and also see <http://www.prixdelausanne.org/community/prize-winners>, accessed December 2014.

2006 to November 2007.

I am a native anthropologist in a dual sense – not only am I Japanese by birth, I have long been a ballet practitioner in Japan – I suggest I enjoyed an advantage over would-be non-native dancers and researchers in analysing dancing women. In general, a native anthropologist is considered to be an anthropologist who conducts fieldwork in their homeland, and researches their own people. However, many anthropologists employ a much tighter definition of the term; along with being ‘insiders’, they see native anthropologists as those who not only share nationalities and ethnicities with their informants, but are researchers who also originally come from the same local areas, share similar cultural and social backgrounds, and belong to the same communities (Clifford 1986; Kuwayama 2004; Narayan 1993; Ohnuki-Tierney 1984b). Narayan, for instance, notes that most so-called native anthropologists, especially from less industrialized countries, seldom ‘belong’ to their research community. She argues that as they tend to be educated scholars from urban areas with middle-class backgrounds, and as they are frequently researching poor peasants in rural areas, they cannot be referred to as native anthropologists. However, my status, namely as a middle-class Japanese woman from Tokyo who used to dance ballet as an amateur and has returned to her former ballet schools for fieldwork, identifies me in a very special way as a native anthropologist insider as defined by Kuwayama and the others mentioned above. I argue that my status as a ballet practitioner, worked to my advantage rather than disadvantage.

A number of anthropologists would support such claims, pointing out that the reason many researchers avoid analysing dance is partly related to their lack of dance experience (Hanna

1987; Spencer 1985; Williams 1991). Kaeppler (1978), for example, asserts that it is important for researchers to have some dancing ability in order to understand the bodily movements and sequences. In any analysis, articulating the non-spoken is seen as problematic. Spencer, for instance, explains that dance represents cultural sentiments and/or individual feelings, and thus it is difficult to cross-culturally understand or interpret a performance (1985: 2). Furthermore, as Wulff points out that in “...studying a mostly non-verbal bodily activity, like dancing, that people spend almost all their time doing, is easier with some dancing experience, unless one is an exceptionally skilled ethnographer, and/or has some other bodily experience that resembles dancing, like skating, for example” (1998a: 10). For these reasons I was well placed to conduct the ethnographic research that this thesis describes.

Because of my childhood and working experience, originally I planned to focus on two female groups: young mothers who enrolled their daughters into ballet lessons and young unmarried women who worked as *OLs*. I hypothesised that young mothers would be absorbed with their children’s lives because I had heard through the Japanese media that since late 1990s more nursery school children have participated in *okeikogoto* than before. *Okeikogoto* literally means practice or lessons, but the nuance cannot be perfectly translated into English. After-school or extra-curricular activities for children and hobbies for adults respectively, signify the closest meaning; though these “pastimes” can be, and often are, taken quite seriously. I also learned early on through government statistics such as the *Leisure White Paper* and online ballet magazines such as *Dance Cube*⁵ that dancing ballet

⁵ *Dance Cube* is organised by Chacott Ballet studio where I did fieldwork. For an example of this online magazine, see <http://www.chacott-jp.com/magazine>, accessed December 2014.

was becoming popular among *OLs* as an after work activity. When I was learning ballet, there were few adult beginners who took ballet classes because there were almost no classes for adult beginners, which I will discuss details in the next chapter. Therefore, I was very interested in why *OLs* had begun to dance ballet. I planned to start my fieldwork in semi-professional ballet schools, K Ballet School and Matsuyama Ballet School, with the expectation of seeing enthusiastic mothers in an unfamiliar setting. Both schools are associated with well-known ballet companies, and I asked them for permission to conduct my fieldwork. However, I was refused by both. The exact reasons for refusal remain unclear for Matsuyama Ballet School, but in the case of K Ballet school the representative told me that it was a policy not to show their lessons to anyone else apart from journalists. She told me not to choose their school to do my fieldwork.

Moreover, before conducting research at the three ballet studios which I introduce below, I danced briefly at Chacott Ballet Studio in order to do research on unmarried young women. I chose this venue because it is located in one of Tokyo's most popular centres, Shibuya, which attracts people from all backgrounds. I joined the Monday evening class (18:40-19:55) for adult beginners, hoping to interact with office ladies who came to the lesson after work. Initially I did not request permission to do fieldwork here, because Chacott seemed to have a strong privacy policy, conveyed through notice boards and leaflets. I was concerned that if I had asked permission to do research I would have been refused, and therefore I started dancing as a fee-paying student. As a result of my status, it was of course impossible for me to interview the students in a formal manner. Initially I had hoped that after building up a level of rapport with other dancers, I could have gone above board and interviewed them, but I was afraid of being expelled from the studio if my true purpose in joining was

discovered. Wulff points out that conducting ethnographic fieldwork in professional ballet companies is nearly an impossible task, this is because ballet is largely a closed and private world (1998a: 11). Even those ballet schools that are amateur learning centres are seldom open to outsiders, and perhaps least of all to an unknown researcher. Due to the difficulties of doing fieldwork at semi-professional ballet schools, interviewing Chacott's students and the ethical issues, I thought it preferable to be an overt researcher and to rely on my previous connections as a ballet student in order to access other ballet studios.

My dance experience did indeed help to get access to ballet studios. Employing previous connections, which anthropologists employ as a tactic to enter the research field, is all the more essential in Japanese society (Nakane 1973). Using this tactic I succeeded in obtaining permission to conduct participant observation at various studios. T.K. Ballet Studio in Yokohama, where I myself had been a ballet student from ages 3 to 18, became my first research field. The second venue was Fairy Ballet Studio (in Futakotamagawa, in Tokyo). This studio is managed by a woman who had been a fellow student at T.K. Ballet Studio. The third studio was Hikari Ballet Studio (in Sakura-shinmachi, in Tokyo), where I gained access through a recommendation made by the owner of Fairy Ballet Studio. At T.K. and Fairy Ballet Studios, I conducted research among mothers who had enrolled their daughters for ballet lessons, and my research among adult beginners was largely conducted at Hikari Ballet Studio. I chose not only to observe adult beginners at both these studios but also to dance with them.

Although I remain certain of my advantages, during the fieldwork I am also aware that there were several limitations in being a native anthropologist. For example, as an insider,

there was a risk that I might interpret the ballet world with an insider's preconceptions (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). In particular, since ballet has certain universal terms or techniques that are taken for granted, the risk seemed particularly high that I would see ballet lessons as a mundane everyday practice and not infused with the exoticism some of my informants longed for. Moreover, in retrospect the fact that I was not a beginner, but was at an intermediate level and an experienced dancer, did not always help me to become close to students. Several students, especially younger ones, seemed threatened by my presence. Some asked me why I was not in the intermediate class and tried to compete with me. For instance, when I joined the beginners' class one woman approximately my age was initially very friendly, but after the lesson she avoided talking to me. I had similar experiences in the other studios as well and had I been a beginner or older, I could perhaps have gained rapport with these women more easily because my status would be inferior or superior to them, and they would not feel the need to compete with me, all these are points I return to in Chapter 6.

Furthermore, despite several anthropologists pointing out the advantages of native-speaking researchers,⁶ my language skills did not always help me to comprehend people's real feelings (*honne*). Some informants only spoke to me at a *tatemae* level; meaning that despite having different opinions or desires the person behaves according to the expectations of one's circumstance or position. For example, several respondents at Hikari Ballet Studio told me that they were not interested in wearing toe shoes but later I found out that in fact they were very eager to do so, and I discuss the importance of this situation in

⁶ These anthropologists point out that language allows natives, as opposed to outsiders, to build intimate relationships with local people more quickly and to emotionally sympathise with indigenous people better (Clifford 1986; Fahim 1982; Kuwayama 2004: 4, 20; Malinowski 1966 [1922]; Messerschmidt 1981).

Chapter 4. In short, it is often very difficult both for native and non-native researchers to build deep relationships in the field. However, somewhat counter-intuitively, if I had not been Japanese my respondents perhaps might have been less inhibited in expressing themselves openly to me and I might have been able to get to know them at earlier stages of the research. Bestor, for instance, points out that during his fieldwork in Japan he played various roles during discussions or interviews in order to uncover people's *honne* (2003: 331): veering from being a knowledgeable researcher to an ignorant *gaijin* (foreigner) who knew nothing about Japan or the topic in hand. Had I been a foreigner I would not have needed to follow tacit Japanese socio-cultural rules or be so sensitive in regard to the female hierarchy in the ballet studio. Also, even if I had asked inappropriate questions (such as about class, educational background and their husbands' jobs and salaries) and behaved in an 'impolite' way, this would very likely have been accepted by many of the interviewees as a foreigner's 'mistake' (discussed in Chapter 3).

In spite of these advantages or limitations, since no anthropologist, Japanese or non-Japanese, has studied ballet in the Japanese context, my work offers an original contribution to this field. Initially I had difficulties getting close to students, but my dual identity as a practitioner of ballet and as a Japanese anthropologist gradually did help me in empathising with my classmates. For example, in contrast to the situation outlined above, some students were impressed by my ballet skills and others were impressed by my willingness to dance with them on the beginners' course. For other students the opportunity to become closer came during interviews. Because I too am a Japanese woman, I could empathise with their problems in relation to the particular patterns of patriarchy in Japan and this engendered a mutual feeling of trust.

Indeed and most importantly, although I originally wanted to research unmarried young dancing women along with observing mothers, during the fieldwork I became interested in married dancing women including those who were middle-aged. I found their stories the most intriguing when I interviewed them. While unmarried young women were often reserved, whether through disinterest, shyness, or competitive inclinations, I could communicate much more openly and in-depth with older women. They happily and frequently chatted to me for more than half an hour and showed a great passion for ballet. I started thinking about the difference between mothers who took their children to ballet classes and those who danced ballet by themselves. Some mothers do both, but until I came to Japan I did not know that so many married women, including those of middle age, danced ballet themselves. Before this, I thought that mothers wanted to make their dreams about dancing ballet come true through their daughters, but the fact is some mothers had decided to dance as well and I started to wonder why they began dancing ballet. In order to answer the question, two months after I started fieldwork I decided to include married women as research informants.

Although I detail the methodology I utilised in each ballet studio in the ethnographical chapters from three to six, in addition to participating and observing in total I managed to conduct interviews with twenty-four mothers of ballet-dancing daughters, and thirty-two dancing women at three different ballet studios. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one, semi-structured basis. I prepared questions beforehand and during the interviews I recorded the conversations and took notes. All interviews of observing mothers took place at the studio during the lessons, as they preferred to talk there due to their lack of time during the rest of the day. Interviews usually lasted from 10 to 30 minutes depending on the

situation (e.g. younger children crying or the lesson finishing during the interview). Nevertheless, I managed to conduct in-depth interviews with a few of the mothers for an entire lesson (an hour). Interviews with dancing women were conducted in more varied situations such as in cafes and restaurants during lunch after the lessons. This is because most of their children were grown up and they had more free time than observing mothers. This being the case, most interviews were much longer than the ones I did with the observing mothers. I conducted in-depth interviews with more than two thirds of students, lasting from 1.5 to 3 hours. In particular, professional housewives were eager to tell me about their difficulties as mothers or wives, and even how ballet helped them to find a release from their problems even though I did not specifically ask them to do so; for example a particularly unhappy situation is discussed in detail Chapter 6.

Japanese women are often described by anthropologists as submissive and constrained by patriarchal norms (Brinton 1993; Lam 1992; Saso 1990). Similarly, ballet is widely considered to be a feminine, *read submissive*, and disciplined, *read constrained*, form of dance. Some feminists argue that ballerinas are the victims of male desire and patriarchal norms (cf. Daly 1987). This anthropological study of dance explores one key research question; why do these otherwise constrained women choose to consume ballet given its highly disciplined features? The seeming paradox here being, if life outside the ballet studio is seen as gender restrictive for daughters, young women, and mothers, then why do they choose a form of dance largely considered to be conservative or traditional as an ostensible escape from society, or escape to an idealized self or future? Lebra (1984) points out in the pre-bubble era that women could feel liberation from the control of domination of husbands or male bosses for example. Moreover, in the post-bubble era many scholars point out that

young people express neoliberal individualism and they feel less constrained by ‘traditional’ norms or expectations compared to older generations (cf. Kosugi 2003; Shirahase 2005), a point which I will discuss in the section on “Dance as *Okeikogoto*” below.⁷ Indeed, several recent studies have described some middle-class Japanese women who express themselves and rebel against social norms, such as feminist activists (Mackie 2003), parasite singles (Dales 2005; Yamada 1999), volunteer work (Nakano 2000) and within new religious movements (Hardacre 1986; Yumiyama 2005). However, with the exception of a few studies (Chiba 2010; Hahn 2007; Kato 2004; Rosenberger 1996; Spielvogel 2003), there is a dearth of discussion regarding Japanese women who try to express themselves through hobbies, such as dancing. This seems related to the fact that it is only since the 1990s that the new consumption pattern of women enjoying leisure, has become prominent. Yet, although the majority who enjoy leisurely pastimes are women, most scholars continue to focus on women’s constraints rather than their moves toward liberation in terms of hobbies.

In order to contextualize this anthropological exploration of ballet in Japan there are three main points that I must outline. First, I will examine the anthropology of dance and ballet in general, and then in Japan in particular. This highlights the history and place of dance and ballet in both Japanese society and in anthropological studies. Second, I will investigate how Japanese women consume ballet as a western art form, a local cultural product, and as *okeikogoto*. Third, since women’s consumption patterns represent social identity, finally I

⁷ ‘Pre-bubble’ and ‘post-bubble’ are terms that may require some explanation particular to the context of Japan. After a period of surging growth in the prior three decades, the bubble economy period emerged in the late 1980s when Japanese land and stock market prices were inflated. However, quickly after it ended in the early 1990s due to collapse of the economy. Japan went into recession and still struggles with that at the time of writing in 2015 (Ishida and Salter 2010: 6-7. See also Genda 2006; Kosugi 2003; Miura and Ueno 2010: 24-25).

examine how the consumption of *okeikogoto* provides social status and individual agency to women who are otherwise commonly considered to conform to expected gender roles.

The Anthropology of Dance

The anthropology of dance has not been treated as a mainstream subject within the discipline (Hanna 1987; Kaeppler 1978; Ohtani 1991; Reed 1998; Spencer 1985; Williams 1991). Hanna points out that “Puritan ethics” have led to dance being regarded as a childish and inferior subject by western scholars until recently (1987: 9). Indeed, ideas based on Cartesian mind/body dualism have been widely dominant amongst western scholars and this has affected dance studies. As a result, many anthropologists and other scholars have avoided analysing dance academically. There are few courses for studying dance or ethnochoreology compared to other performing arts such as music or ethnomusicology. More to the point, even the courses that do exist tend mainly to train choreographers and dance practitioners rather than analyse dance in a more traditional academic mode (Ohtani 1991).

When early twentieth century anthropologists analysed dance, more often than not they focused on analysing ritual or religious dance in non-western societies, and rarely on dance in ‘modern’ society (Boas 1972[1944]; Evans-Pritchard 1928; Mead 1943[1928]; Radcliffe-Brown 1922). For example, Radcliffe-Brown (1922) analysed dances held in the initiation and peace-making ceremonies in the Andaman Islands, arguing that they had the power to bring people together under certain circumstances. Evans-Pritchard (1928) examined the beer dance of the Azande, positing that such dancing was a social activity which allowed men and women to display their sexual desire. Moreover, many anthropologists have

examined the ghost dance. This is a dance which occurred as a religious/millennial movement among Native Americans from the 1870s to 1890s in order to resist the American government in a display of social solidarity (Hill 1944; Mair 1959; Mooney 1965; Wallace 1956, 1966). However, what remains problematic in these approaches is that anthropologists have tended to categorise non-western dances as ‘primitive’. For example:

What is the value of the dance in primitive society, what needs does it satisfy, what role does it play in native life? The usual accounts of dancing amongst primitive peoples give us so little information about the sociology of the dance that we are unable to answer these queries.

(Evans-Pritchard 1928:121)

Boas notes:

At that time [1944] it was necessary to study “primitive” and “exotic” cultures in order to realize how dance could fulfil a vital role in the life of peoples. For us as members of the “Western Christian Civilization” dance was only one of those frills of entertainment or a downright evil.

(Boas 1972 [1944]: preface)

Thus, early anthropologists often argued that dance in ‘primitive’ society was somehow different from dance in ‘civilised’ Western society. However, just as Lévi-Strauss (1963) questioned the normative dichotomy between modern and primitive, I contend that dance should not be divided into primitive and civilised forms. There are no clear arguments about the definition of primitive dance, and moreover a number of scholars have discussed the fact that the concept of ‘primitive’ in the anthropology of art is itself problematic (Gell 1992; Layton 1991; Morphy 1994). I suggest it is enlightening to review the dilemmas surrounding ‘primitive art’, as outlined by Morphy, in order to critique the concept of

‘primitive dance’.

One of the reasons for using the word ‘primitive’ when discussing art in the past, according to Morphy, was that anthropologists used to analyse the topics of art and aesthetics through the lens of “ethnocentrism and difficulties related to definition” (1994:678). He asserts that the term ‘primitive art’ was applied to the non-Western arts by European anthropologists. They considered the ‘pure’ arts (especially fine art) to be an exemplary product of ‘civilised’ European culture because art was recognised as consisting of objects which were accorded high aesthetic value (Morphy 1994: 648-649), not to mention economic value. As a result, anthropologists categorised non-Western art as ‘primitive’, in other words that which was “prior to Western European art” and belonging to “an inferior civilization” (ibid.: 648-499). In a similar manner, according to Kealiinohomoku (1983: 535-536), several anthropologists (cf. Kirstein 1942; Sorell 1967; Terry 1956) have categorised primitive dance⁸ as an unskilled, unstructured form and clearly distinguish it from Western dance, especially classical ballet.

Although nowadays the anthropology of art avoids using the term ‘primitive’, the term ‘art’ still implies “an instrument of value” and is used as “a rhetorical device” (Morphy 1994:648). For example, although many contemporary anthropologists try to include non-western arts within their constructed category of arts, it is only applied to those few non-western forms which are considered to be comparatively ‘civilised’ when viewed alongside

⁸ Kealiinohomoku points out that there is no such thing as so-called primitive dance; instead there is Masai dance, Kwakiutl dance and so on (1983:534).

those from the West (Morphy 1994: 648).⁹ However, a contemporary or post-modern and reflexive anthropology attempts to see art in a cross-cultural perspective (ibid.: 678); in particular, Strathern (1988) emphasises that the study of art should be contextualised within indigenous constructs.

Similarly, while in the field of dance the term ‘primitive’ was used to discuss non-Western dance, these practices are increasingly being afforded more respect and the term “primitive” dance is being replaced by the category ‘performing arts’. According to Blacking, some anthropologists since then tend to analyse the performing arts in “their social context and functions” (1979: xiv). For example, Cohen (1993), Cowan (1990), Hanna (1988), Kaeppler (1978), Kealiinohomoku (1983), Royce (1977), Williams (1991) and Wulff (1998a, 1998b) try to interpret dance cross-culturally, ranging from classical ballet and popular forms to non-western dance. Consequently, these anthropologists have analysed dance not only from a ritual or religious perspective in non-western societies, but also through drawing upon a variety of theories in ‘modern’ society. For example, while some anthropologists interpret dance using theories about gender and sexuality in order to understand social structure and gender roles (as in the pioneering work by Mead 1943[1928], but see also Cowan 1990; Hanna 1988) others analyse dance as acting out important social and historical aspects of colonialism (Comaroff 1985; Connerton 1989; Stoller 1995). Indeed, since the 1970s the discussion of relationships between politics and dance in terms of identity, ethnicity and (trans)nationalism has dominated in the study of

⁹ On the other hand, abstract and modern artists like Picasso purposely incorporated forms labelled as ‘primitive’ art into the modern, and this has happened with dance as well. Some classical ballet and much contemporary dance have been inspired by ‘primitive’ dance. For example, Nijinsky’s ballet work, *Rite of spring* (1913), was inspired by a pagan ritual in pre-Christian Russia in which a virgin girl was sacrificed for the coming spring.

anthropology of dance (cf. Neveu Kringelbach and Skinner 2012; Reed 1998).

Some argue that the creation of a national dance or the revival of ‘traditional’ dance is a means of exploring national identity in post-colonial contexts (cf. Daniel 1991, 1995; Ness 1992; Neveu Kringelbach 2012; Savigliano 1995). For example, Daniel argues that in post-revolution Cuba, Afro-Cuban Rumba was carefully chosen by the state as a national dance rather than ballet or other popular dances such as *son* or *conga* (1991: 2). Rumba was performed almost exclusively by working-class Afro-Cubans, thus rumba supported a socialist political ideology, notions of egalitarian and pointed to Cuba’s Afro-Latin heritage. Moreover, Neveu Kringelbach (2012) points out that in postcolonial Senegal ‘traditional’ performances were encouraged by the national dance company to promote national unity and as a result Casamançaise dance troupes in Dakar became a representation of regional cum national identity or even transnationalism by moving all over the world in tours. Others such as Ness (1997) or Nájera-Ramírez (2012) argue that in postcolonial Philippines or Mexico choreographed dances such as *igorot* or *Falklorico* were supported by their respective states. These dances combined their indigenous dances with classical ballet, thus they were regarded as displaying both national identity and cosmopolitanism or transnationalism.

Other anthropologists have attempted to analyse dance from the perspective of embodiment. However, although the moving body is a fundamental aspect of dance (Foster 1995; Fraleigh 1996; Thomas 1995, 2003),¹⁰ a coherent kinaesthetic approach was not developed

¹⁰ According to Fraleigh, “...dance is in essence an embodied art, the body is lived (experiential) ground of the dance aesthetic” (1996: xiii).

until relatively recently in dance studies (including the sociology and anthropology of dance). For example, a number of sociologists have pointed out the lack of work on moving bodies in the sociology of dance (Brinson 1983; Foster 1998; Thomas 1995, 2003; Wainwright and Turner 2006). And although many influential sociologists and social theorists have analysed bodies and social action (Bourdieu 1977; Featherstone 1991; Foucault 1977; Giddens 1984; Goffman 1971[1959]; O'Neill 1985; Shilling 1993), scholars such as Turner (1984) and Watson (2000) argue that when examining bodies sociologists and social theorists have tended to over-rely on existing theory-oriented texts related to gender, history and sexuality rather than on data based, empirical research with the exception of a few such as Connell (1990), Leder (1990) or Wacquant (2004).¹¹ Compared to sociology, anthropology has been built upon a tradition of participant observation, and also has a significant and more recent interest in the agency of the human body in everyday life. Anthropologists have tended to interpret the body as a symbol related to ritual or religious practice, rather than as an embodied state or lived body with the exception of few studies (cf. Csordas 1990, 1993; Ingold 2000; Jackson 1983; Scheper-Hughes 1994). Thus, in anthropology there has been a lack of analysis of dancing bodies (Ness 1992; Novack 1990).

My research focuses on the lived moving body and as such it is an original theoretical contribution to the study of anthropology of dance. However, studies of dance since the 1990s have been influenced by a phenomenological approach. This has started a trend of paying more attention to bodily movement, including dance in modern society and western

¹¹ For example, Wacquant researched professional boxers' living bodies drawing on Bourdieu's *habitus*, and points out in his *Body & Soul* "the necessity of a sociology not only of the body, in the sense of object, but also from the body, that is, deploying the body as tool of inquiry and vector of knowledge" (2004: viii).

theatre among anthropologists (Desmond 1998; Lewis 1995; Potter 2008), sociologists (Wainwright and Turner 2004) or dance scholars (Fraleigh 1996; Morris 2001; Sheets-Johnstone 1999). This new development mainly draws on Merleau-Ponty's idea of the *preobjective* (1962), Bourdieu's interpretation of *habitus* (1977, 1984, 1990), and partly from Foucault's conceptualization of the *docile body* (1977); these theorists problematize the Cartesian distinction between mind and body and analyse the subjective experience of embodiment, hence making their concepts attractive to many dance academics. The phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty argues in his work *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) for the importance of the "lived body," because it is the body that interacts with the world. He states that "the world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions" (1962: xi-xii). Merleau-Ponty suggests that perception starts with the body because objects are, in the end, the result of thinking and thinking is ultimately dependent upon embodied perceptions. Therefore, it is essential to analyse embodied states via a *preobjective* process (subjective experience) rather than through empiricism and intellectualism.¹²

The majority of anthropologists (Aalten 2007; Downey 2005; Farnell 1994; Lewis 1992, 1995) and dance scholars (Fraleigh 1991, 1996; Kozel 1998; Sheets-Johnstone 1979) value this phenomenological analysis of the living, and indeed thinking, body because it allows for a non-dualistic analysis of dance such that subjects are endowed with agency.¹³ For

¹² As this thesis makes clear, the work of Csordas (1993) has also been influential in theorising the body, perception, and by extension, dance. However I will refer to his work in more detail below.

¹³ Medical anthropology has also taken up the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, because embodied experience is central to their study. For example, patients are aware of their own physical bodies when they experience illness or injury (Scheper-Hughes 1994; Mol and Law 2004).

instance, by interpreting the movement in Brazilian capoeira as being parallel to everyday movements,¹⁴ Lewis (1992, 1995) argues that Afro-Brazilians, who are socially and racially situated in the lowest strata of Brazilian society and are thus physically and psychologically constrained in daily life, find a form of liberation through the embodied fighting and kicking moves. Moreover, Fraleigh argues that employing a phenomenological framework helps her to analyse abstract dance, such as that choreographed by Cunningham.¹⁵ His dances, according to Fraleigh, consist of a variety of colours, music, objects and movements, which dance scholars have attempted to theoretically analyse from an outsider's or detached perspective. Fraleigh, however, following Merleau-Ponty, proposes that comprehending the meaning of Cunningham's dances must be done by perceiving the actual movements (1991: 12-13).

Just as Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has influenced the analysis of moving bodies, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* focuses on experiential bodily practice and has attracted the attention of several dance scholars. Following Mauss' body techniques (1979[1934]), Bourdieu defines *habitus* as a system of generative dispositions. He states that *habitus* "produces individual and collective practices ...[and] it ensures the active presence of past experiences...and their constancy over time" (1990: 54). Therefore, *habitus* can be described as unconscious social and historical reproduction through bodily practice. However, Bourdieu argues that *habitus* is not merely a collection of objective and social

¹⁴ Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial art or dance, performed by two people in a circle with music.

¹⁵ Cunningham is one of the most well-known American dance performers and choreographers, as will be explained in detail below.

practices. It is also determined in relation to a social field¹⁶ in which agents compete to gain status and domination through various forms of capital: economic (money and property), cultural (knowledge and skills achieved through family heritage, education and cultural products) and symbolic (honour and prestige). For example, the status or power of an agent determines whether they want to preserve the current structure or not. In sum, *habitus* is a ‘transposable disposition’, because agents may carry out strategic actions in a field (1977: 79, 1984: 170, 1990: 9).

Several sociologists or dance scholars have employed a Bourdieu inspired concept of *habitus* when considering the practices of daily dance lessons (cf. Daly 1995; Wainwright and Turner 2004, 2006). Other dance scholars have used the concept to interpret dance movements on the stage as the integration of social norms with the relative autonomy of choreographers and dancers (cf. Desmond 1998; Morris 2001).¹⁷ Morris (2001), for instance, explores how the modern dance piece, *Night Journey*, successfully represents its choreographer’s aspiration through simple dance steps. The story is based on the Greek myth of Oedipus, and was choreographed by Martha Graham in 1947.¹⁸ According to Morris this dance consists of numerous “conventionalised movements” which form part of the western daily ‘*habitus*’. However, unlike in the original story, Graham presented

¹⁶ Bourdieu defines field as “a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97).

¹⁷ As stated in footnote 10, Wacquant analysed boxers’ not dancers’ bodies at a gym in a Chicago ghetto, drawing on Bourdieu’s *habitus* (and bodily capital). Nevertheless, he argues that these boxers are required to discipline their bodies as a ‘pugilistic *habitus*’ through hard training, healthy diets and weight control, all of which are, according to Wacquant, usually very difficult for working-class people to do (2004: 58-71).

¹⁸ Graham is another well-known American dance performer and choreographer and used to teach Cunningham, as will be explained in detail below.

Oedipus' wife, Jocasta, in the main role in an attempt to represent female power through her dance. Therefore, Morris suggests that *Night Journey* embodies both societal *habitus* and the choreographer's agency (ibid.: 72-78).

The third major theorist who has shaped the embodied approach to social science research is Foucault. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) he argues that the body is constrained by the disciplined power of institutions such as factories, schools, and hospitals. The effect of power on bodies is considered to produce docile bodies through "the infinitely minute web of panoptic techniques" (ibid.: 224) and the disciplines of the "subtle calculated technology of subjection" (ibid.: 221). Foucault explains that this is a new form of control over bodies in modern society, because power no longer works from the top down as it used to operate in traditional societies; where, for example, the monarchy repressed an anonymous body. Rather, today power enmeshes individual bodies in subtle ways that require self-surveillance (this concept is further explored in Chapter 5).

Compared to the common usage of Merleau-Ponty, few scholars use Bourdieu as a base for dance theory, and fewer scholars still analyse dancing bodies by drawing on Foucault's work with some notable exceptions (such as Foster 1995, 1998; Kastrinou-Theodoropoulou 2009). Following Foucault's idea of a docile body, Foster (1995, 1998), for example, analyses dancers' bodies discursively in western theatre, from classical ballet to modern dance. According to her, dancers cultivate and discipline their own bodies through training in order to master techniques or to achieve ideal bodies. Each dance has different requirements in terms of techniques and bodies as discussed in detail in the next section. Although their bodies are constrained by these instructions, according to Foster, dancers are

sometimes made aware of their own bodies through pain, distortion and “a developing physical capacity”, and this awareness helps dancers develop their skills (1998: 236-241).

However, Morris (who analysed Graham’s dance above) points out that despite Foster’s best attempts, her analysis is flawed from the start, because Foucault’s bodies are too disciplined and passive to be seen as lived or phenomenological bodies (2001: 52-53). I agree with Morris’s view, amongst others, since there is no autonomous agency in Foucault’s bodies (cf. McNay 1999), but I believe that there are difficulties in Morris’s analysis too. This is primarily because she interprets dancers’ agency by drawing on Bourdieu. Like Foucault’s conceptualisation of the body, Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* posits individuals that have little freedom within social structures. Scheper-Hughes argues that there is an absence of “the lived experience of body-self” in Foucault’s and Bourdieu’s work (1994: 232). In general, in approaches which draw heavily upon both Bourdieu and Foucault, there are limitations in interpretation of the lived body, whereas in phenomenological approaches subjectivity is not bounded by social structure but is produced through the body itself (Farnell 1999; Knibbe and Versteeg 2008). On the one hand it is true that in the case of my ballet informants Foucault’s and Bourdieu’s work are useful to explain how Japanese women’s bodies and status positions are considered to be regulated by and subordinated to patriarchal norms; an example that is discussed later in this thesis. On the other hand, because my dancing informants enjoyed knowing and cultivating a sense of self and a mind-body connection through dancing ballet, I choose to focus on Merleau-Ponty’s lived body and Csordas’ conceptualization of somatic modes of attention (1993), when I analyse my informants’ embodied experience in Chapter 5. Indeed, Csordas extended the ideas of Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu, and argues that somatic

attention which includes “attention to” and “attention with” bodies that are also informed culturally and socially. Thus, his work is useful to explain how my informants enjoyed moving bodies – albeit bodies regulated by social norms outside ballet studio. Several dance scholars have also employed Csordas’ ideas of somatic attention (cf. Rothfield 2010; Sklar 2000), and I will refer to his work in more detail in Chapter 5.

To sum up, these anthropologists argue that dance can be a means for understanding societies and in asserting individual agency through the practice of the body (Blacking 1985; Hanna 1987; Kaeppler 1978; Kealiinohomoku 1979; Novack 1995; Royce 1977; Spencer 1985; Williams 1991). According to Spencer, society creates dance, and this being the case dance “reflects powerful social forces”, such as gender inequalities, cultural imperialism and globalisation (1985: 2-3). All are points discussed in this thesis. Though difficult to pinpoint, the significant meanings conveyed through dance help us to understand the resonances or effects of a particular culture and society. In addition, many anthropologists have pointed out that dance provides opportunities for practitioners to express their desires or achieve their aims through performing (Hanna 1987; Royce 1977: 17; Spencer 1985: 4). In modern societies dance has become a commodity because it can be taught, learned and consumed in the variety of ways I explore below.

The Anthropology of Classical Ballet

Classical ballet was always considered to be the most ‘civilised’ of European traditional theatre dances because of its skilful technique and aesthetic aspects. For example, Stokes, a ballet scholar, asserts that as a European theatre dance classical ballet is a “sublime,” and “stylized” “cultural form” in contrast to other, “oriental,” dances (1983: 245-6). According

to Kealiinohomoku, “The West” sees classical ballet “as if it was the one great divinely ordained apogee of the performing arts” (1983: 536). Therefore, ballet was previously not regarded as an anthropological topic because it was seen to be so far removed from the anthropologist’s typical, and expected, interest in ‘primitive’ or ritual dance. Although since the 1970s some anthropologists have started analysing ballet as an anthropological topic (Hanna 1988; Kealiinohomoku 1983; Ness 1997; Novack 1993; Reed 1998: 505; Royce 1977; Williams 1991; Wulff 1998a, 1998b), compared to modern dance, there have been few attempts to analyse ballet through an embodied perspective. This is because several dance scholars such as Daly (1987) argue that ballet is too formalised, feminised and disciplined a form of dance to enable dancers to assert individual agency. Nevertheless ballet is still one of the performing arts. I argue that through a phenomenological research perspective, ballet dancers can be seen to have an embodied experience similar to modern dance, a point detailed below.

Other scholars continue to analyse ballet, not as being ‘ethnic’ or ritualistic, but as a form of western art. For example, Hanna examines sexuality and gender as represented in both non-western and western dance, such as Indian Kathakali and Japanese Noh as well as classical and modern ballet. She asserts that western arts such as classical ballet have often taken ideas from non-western cultures, although the reverse has also occurred (1988: 32-33). Moreover, Ness (1997) emphasises how aforementioned Philippine transnational ballet, *Igorot*, has tried to create a new form of dance by combining the western ‘art form’ and its own ‘ethnic’ traditional dance. Even Wulff, who has examined ballet in much more depth than any other dance anthropologist, argues that ballet should be seen as art and not perceived as a ritual dance, although it has elements of ritual such as backstage liminality,

where dancers transform into the roles they play (1998b: 116). Thus, I argue that they have not clearly distanced themselves from the traditional dance scholars' perspective of what is 'civilised'. In fact, Boas (1972 [1944]) and La Meri (1967) argued that ballet lost its ethnicity because of its internationalisation, and that therefore it could be difficult to interpret it using an anthropological approach which would seek to contextualise it within particular communities or rituals.

Kealiinohomoku (1983), however, points out that classical ballet should be considered a western ethnic dance and can therefore be interpreted in an anthropological way. This is because:

Ballet is a product of the Western world, and it is a dance form developed by Caucasians who speak Indo-European languages and who share a common European tradition. Granted that ballet is international in that it "belongs" to European countries plus groups of European descendants in the Americas

(Kealiinohomoku 1983: 544).

According to Kealiinohomoku, ballet represents western culture and is a "stylized Western custom" (ibid.: 545) because major ballet stories are based on European and Russian folk tales such as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker* and *The Firebird*, or on European novels or classical works such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Don Quixote*, *Giselle* and *Manon*. In particular, most stories follow Christian ideals and also represent heterosexual romantic relationships.

However, although ballet may be seen to represent western culture, can we really call it an ethnic dance? I consider ballet to be both a form of western professional **and** traditional

dance at the same time. Schechner mentions that traditional dances such as Kathakali, ballet or Noh require their students to start training at an early age in order to become professionals. During training, much as in initiation rites, trainees are expected to approach dance *tabula rasa* – a state before the mind gains set impressions. When training is completed they are initiated, “incorporated” into tradition and transferred to “marked people” status (1995: 257). I argue that these traditional dances, performed by specially trained professionals, can be categorised separately from dance forms which might be performed by ‘ordinary’ people without training. In particular, these professional or traditional dances were performed for aristocrats or nobles, and they thus continue to be a source of cultural capital, though ordinary people can nowadays enjoy them. That is to say, such classical dances are consumed by audiences as a commodity; amusement or entertainment to be watched at a price.

Therefore, I believe it is more appropriate to consider classical ballet as a western professional—traditional dance rather than an ethnic dance. This allows for a different form of analysis than what might be used to understand ritual dance. In modern society individuals can choose a certain type of dance to watch or learn, and so dance can be seen as a commodity or as a product as well as something that represents ethnicity or nationality. For example, Argentinean tango or the aforementioned ‘traditional’ dance in Senegal can be both about ethnic or national identity and a leisure commodity by going on world tours as a global product (cf. Neveu Kringelbach 2012; Savigliano 1992, 1995). Moreover, several scholars have argued that in late capitalist society the individual body is utilised as commodity (especially by the middle classes) to assert self-identity (Featherstone 1991; Shilling 1993; Turner 1984). In this regard, dance is no exception because amateur dancers,

not only professional dancers, are able to express themselves. Thus, while I concur with Kealiinohomoku's main point – that ballet should be considered as an anthropological topic because it reflects European culture, tradition, religion and gender – this thesis examines classical ballet as a tool, not only as a western ethnic dance, for understanding amateur practitioners' societal aspirations.

The Anthropology of Dance and Classical Ballet in Japan

If anthropologists have paid comparatively little attention to dance, and even less specifically to ballet, they have devoted scant attention to analysing dance, especially ballet, in Japan. Likely this is because Japan is a democratic, advanced capitalist society and therefore the lure of studying the 'primitive' is not present; it is a society impossible to paint as 'pre-modern'. More to the point, even though a few anthropologists have offered interpretations of dance in Japan, they tend to analyse it as part of a wider range of ritual, religious, folk and regional practices, or from the perspective of gender studies (Averbuch 1995; Ohtani 1991; Yanagida 1911). In addition to this, anthropological analyses of the traditional Japanese theatre dance forms of *Nihon-buyo* (Japanese traditional dance), *Kabuki*, *Noh*, and of the modern dance form of *Butoh*, have been common (Gunji 1957; Hahn 2007; Hanna 1987; Inoura and Kawatake 1981; Kuniyoshi 1985; Royce 2004; Sellers-Young 1993).

However, although the majority of Japanese people enjoy western styles of dance more than Japanese traditional or religious dancing, anthropologists have tended to ignore this fact, with the exception of a few scholars such as Goldstein-Gidoni and Daliot-Bul (2002), Robertson (1998), Savigliano (1992), Spielvogel (2003) and Valentine (1998) who have

analysed the popularity of non-Japanese or Western dance (ballroom dance, tango and so on) and of contemporary Japanese dance based on western forms (Takarazuka,¹⁹ *Takenoko-zoku*,²⁰ and others). However, no one has analysed the popularity of classical ballet in Japan. Nevertheless, although most people consider classical ballet to be an art form introduced from the West in the early twentieth century (discussed in detail in Chapter 2), I believe it is a subject worthy of analysis within the Japanese context simply because Japanese people are more interested in western theatrical and traditional dance than in native dance forms (Ichikawa 1994: 4). In particular, from the post-war era more women have started consuming ballet as a local cultural product, as an *okeikogoto*. Therefore, one of the themes of this thesis is to explore how the growing popularity of ballet *okeikogoto* among ordinary Japanese women represents and reflects their relationship with broader Japanese society.

Ballet as *okeikogoto*

According to Nakamori, *okeikogoto* implies activities in which people learn a skill from a master in return for payment or contributing labour (1999: 19). He delineates three distinct types of *okeikogoto*: the arts (e.g. dance, music), life skills (e.g. cooking, sewing) and sports (e.g. swimming, golf). Since taking part requires time and money, *okeikogoto* used to be considered luxurious a middle-class cultural practice. Even though the majority of Japanese have been able to consume *okeikogoto* since the economic bubble burst, it is still difficult for working-class people to take up some of these practices. At first glance, this seems paradoxical but in fact, as explained in Chapter 2, this is an outcome of Japan's economic restructuring in the 1990s. As a result, while some merely aim to gain a skill, others expect

¹⁹ The Takarazuka Revue is a Japanese female-only musical theatre troupe. It was founded by Ichizo Kobayashi in 1913 in Takarazuka city, Hyogo prefecture (Robertson 1998; Stickland 2007).

²⁰ *Takenoko-zoku* literally means bamboo-shoot tribe, and it appeared in the early 1980s in the Harajuku area of Tokyo. They wore colourful costumes and make-up and danced in circles with patterned movements (Valentine 1998: 263-4).

to attain a certain status or to acquire cultural capital through their practice.

In Japan, despite the existence of class differences, the majority of people claim to be middle class (Clammer 1997; Ishida and Slater 2010). This is because Japanese people believe they can attain middle-class status through their consumption patterns. Ishida (1988), for example, argues that there *are* class differences in Japanese society, but that the lifestyle of most Japanese obscures these differences. In other words, in Japanese society individual tastes are not accurate signs or markers of class, and so consumption patterns become important ways in which to display status. Therefore, what kind of *okeikogoto* Japanese people consume becomes important in order to distinguish themselves from others in the shared social field (cf. Bourdieu 1984 and discussed in Chapters 3).

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital can be determined by the degree to which activities differ from 'everyday life'. Thus while some *okeikogoto*, such as swimming or cooking, have relatively low prestige, other practices, such as learning traditional Japanese or western arts, enjoy a more privileged status. For example, studying and performing the tea ceremony or ballet requires certain knowledge and techniques which can only be acquired through years of expensive lessons. Therefore, these activities were traditionally envisioned as being a part of elite culture, and are still perceived as prestigious pastimes by the Japanese to a certain degree even after the democratisation of *okeikogoto* has taken place (cf. Kato 2004; Ohbuchi 2007). It is important to note that while in France, according to Bourdieu, gaining capital was clearly enacted to cross-cut class, in Japan this distinction works in a more subtle way focused mainly within gradations of the middle class, a point discussed in Chapter 3. Therefore, it is worth investigating how *okeikogoto* are consumed

by the wide range of middle-class women in twenty-first century Japan.

Practising *okeikogoto* is popular amongst many groups of Japanese people, including children, women and retired men. According to a 2001 survey 62 per cent of nursery school children (aged three to six) participated in some form of *okeikogoto* (Hisamoto, et al. 2003: 33); a 2005 survey found that 30 per cent of adults did as well (NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjō 1990: 4-5, 2005: 23).²¹ It is notable that the majority of people who enjoy *okeikogoto* are women, regardless of age. Gender expectations held by parents govern involvement in children's affairs, as traditionally parents had different expectations for sons and daughters. In short, while boys were expected to be ambitious, brave and educated, girls were told to be quiet and submissive in order to make good wives, and higher education was considered to be less important for them (Fujimura-Fanselow 1995: 131; Hendry 1986: 162).²² As a result, most upper-class parents believe that it is better for girls to gain some cultural capital through practising *okeikogoto* in order to find husbands, over and above their formal education (cf. Tobin 1992b: 18). However, today these gender distinctions are much less pronounced and a higher percentage of girls than boys go to university (cf. Shirahase 2005). In particular, urban middle-class mothers are keen to invest in both education and *okeikogoto* for their children including daughters as *kyōiku mama*, and many anthropologists have noted the emergence in the post-war era of this new type of mother (Allison 1996b: 136; Hendry 2003: 89; Honda 2008; Iwao 1993: 139; Sasagawa 2004: 181; Sugiyama 1996). While the majority of scholars focus on the *kyōiku mama*'s

²¹ This survey was conducted by NHK Hōsō Bunka Kenkyūjo (The NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute), which was set up by NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) in 1946.

http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/research/life/life_20060210.pdf, accessed April 2008.

²² Higher education (university level) was not commonly open to women until the end of the Second World War, but women of upper-class have been always available to higher education (Fujimura-Fanselow 1995; Pharr 1981).

efforts to enrol their children in higher education, a few such as Sasagawa (2004) and Honda (2008) extend their interests to mothers taking their children to *okeikogoto* including ballet; these are points discussed in Chapter 2.

Adults engaging in *okeikogoto* are another issue. According to a 2006 survey, at 26.6 percent, women were nearly twice as likely to take part in *okeikogoto* as men.²³ Long working hours and their class situation prevents many men from taking part in time consuming pastimes. While some working-class men enjoy hobbies such as calligraphy (Roberson 2003: 134), white-collar employees who work until they retire (normally 65) usually do not have the time to engage in *okeikogoto*, although more older men have recently started to participate in order to fill their post-retirement days.

According to Mori (1996), apart from childhood there are two peak times for women to become involved in *okeikogoto*. The first of these periods is the span of time after graduating from school and before getting married. During this period an average woman tends to have more free time (unless she is a white-collar employee) because she does not have wifely or motherly duties. As with young girls, *okeikogoto* used to also be seen as an advantage for young women who were trying to find good marriage partners (*hanayome shugyō*). In particular, until a couple of decades ago, young unmarried upper middle-class women practised traditional Japanese arts such as the tea ceremony (*ocha*) and flower arranging (*ohana*) as part of their *hanayome shugyō* because these particular *okeikogoto* were considered important cultural capital for them to acquire (Hendry 1993a: 234; Vogel

²³ This survey was conducted by NTT NaviSpace Cooperation, which is a member of NTT (Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation) groups. http://www.research.nttnavi.co.jp/305clr/cclr_034_01.html, accessed January 2011.

1978: 19). These days, however, the majority of women choose *okeikogoto* including ballet, not only to enhance their marriage prospects, but also for their own enjoyment guided by the desire to achieve some dream or attain personal ideals, this will be elaborated upon in Chapter 5. According to a survey, in 2008 56.7% of young female workers practised *okeikogoto*.²⁴

The second peak period for women to become involved in *okeikogoto* is after their children have grown up and left home, because their motherly duties have diminished (Mori 1996). In fact, the number of mothers who practise *okeikogoto* increases as their children get older. According to a survey in 2007,²⁵ while only 15% of mothers who have children aged 0-3 are involved in *okeikogoto*, more than half (52%) of mothers whose children are older than 18 take part. This figure seems to be related to social expectations; mothers are expected by their husbands, peers and society to stay at home when children are small but are more able to enjoy their free time after their children have grown. Middle-aged women pursuing their own aims attract less disapproval if they have completed their childrearing duties, a point returned to in the following chapter. Recently more and more middle-aged women have begun *okeikogoto*; while only 20% of mothers in their 20s and 30s take part, an astounding 62.7% of middle-aged women in their 60s and older are involved. Moreover, nearly half of Japan's middle-aged women (those in their 50s to 60s) enjoy multiple *okeikogoto*, a higher proportion than in any other age group. Indeed, during my fieldwork the majority of women who attended ballet classes were middle-aged women in their late 40s to 60s a point returned to in Chapters 4-6. Therefore, women's *okeikogoto* consumption patterns,

²⁴ This survey was conducted by Sankei Living Newspaper.

<http://www.sankeiliving.co.jp/research/ol/065.html>, accessed Janaury 2015

²⁵ http://www.sankeiliving.co.jp/mrs_report/letter/20071217.html, accessed Janaury 2011

including ballet, are related to their socially normative gender roles and how they differ according to their stage in life.

Dance *okeikogoto*: Women, ballet and consumption

According to Clammer (1997), gender is a key element in understanding consumption in Japan, and women's consumption patterns reflect a social identity that differs from men's. That is to say, since the 1980s young, and especially unmarried, women's purchasing of commodities such as brand goods or consuming cultural products such as travelling abroad are often described as fuelling the Japanese economy (Martinez 1998: 5; Rosenberger 1996; Tobin 1992b). In particular, in the post-bubble era young women's self-oriented and hedonistic way of consumption, including young married women, increasingly have been the subject of attention in the media (cf. Goldstein-Gidoni 2012; Ueno and Nobuta 2011; a point discussed in Chapter 6); whilst some middle-aged women also have garnered media attention because of their economic power as outlined in Chapter 2. However, for women who take up ballet as a part of *okeikogoto*, whatever economic power they enjoy is not sufficient to feel liberation or satisfaction; they remain embedded within the hegemonic gender ideals of Japanese society (albeit younger generations intend to subvert masculine and feminine ideals compared to older generations, a point to which I return below).

Individual bodies are constrained by power from the outside and are thus concomitantly 'social bodies'; meaning that bodies become subjugated to the major 'outer' institutions such as schools, hospitals, media and so on. In the context of Japan, one aspect of the social body can be viewed as the practices and discourses that define gender roles. For example, the neo-Marxist social theorist Althusser (1971) suggests that in capitalist society the

Ideological State Apparatus plays a large role in regulating the social practices of individuals through the educational, familial, and political institutions. Several second wave feminists from the 1960-70s draw on his theorising to explain the structure of gender inequality because under capitalist and patriarchal society the state has tried to control women, as wives and mothers especially, through an ideology that made them subordinate in status while at the same time they were expected to be the social reproducers of such inequalities (cf. Assiter 1990; Barrett 1988; Hennessy 1993). And, similar to my discussion in the above ‘Anthropology of Dance’ section, Foucault and Bourdieu suggest how individual bodies are disciplined by social power or constrained by normative assumptions or *habitus*.

Foucault argues that bodies are controlled by the disciplinary power of institutions and this manipulates individual bodies into becoming docile bodies; creating bodies that are self-regulating without a sense of selfhood. Put another way, bodies become individuated but not individual. Foucault’s theorization can explain how women’s bodies are transformed into disciplined and subservient bodies. In other words, women’s bodies are (re)produced as the ‘docile bodies’ of mothers, sisters, wives or daughters following the dominant view of women as selfless carers. On the macro scale therefore, the female body in Japan is subordinated to the power of social and cultural construction in a society that produces a perception of women’s bodies as being docile and subservient to male power. Following Foucault’s analysis of power, Butler (1993) argues in her gender performativity work that gender functions as a regulatory power insofar that gender is perceived as normative in order to form subjects internally rather than impose power externally. She suggests that “a person’s gender must be continually reinforced in a patriarchal culture by that person’s

repetition or ‘citation’ of gender-appropriate acts, his or her ‘doing’ or ‘performing’ of gender” (1993: 12-16). Similarly, for Bourdieu, *habitus* is unconsciously acquired as a bodily disposition. He notes how the body posture of North African Kabyle women is inclined downwards in keeping with their expected gender roles of submission and subordination to men in that society (1990: 70).

Even though Foucault and Bourdieu’s theories may not explain autonomous or individual agency, I think that in the case of Japanese women, and especially middle-class women, it is useful to draw upon body-external forms of power because Japanese women (and men) are indeed strongly subjected to expected gender roles from partners, peers and society. Many anthropologists (Brinton 1993; Lam 1992; Lebra 1984; Ochiai 1997; Saso 1990; Smith 1987) argue that while Japanese middle-class men are not seen as proper adults until they get married and have full-time white-collar jobs to support a family, women are equally constrained by the flip side of this gender ideology or discourse. Moreover, it has often been suggested that Japanese do not have a consistent and core sense of individuality/selfhood (cf. Bachnik 1992; Doi 1981; Kondo 1987; Lebra 1976; Rosenberger 1992b; Smith 1983; Tobin 1992a). Such analysts suggest that individuals tend to shift/alert their sense of autonomy according to the social situation of being *uchi* (inside)/*soto* (outside) or *omote* (exposed to public attention)/*ura* (hidden from public eye) and in turn behave with expectations of *amaeru* (indulgence or dependency) or shift between *honne* /*tatemae*. While several scholars argue that not only Japanese, but also people in every society need some slippage in their sense of self to some degree (Cave 2007; Mathews 1996: 721), Japanese women are considered to especially lack a bounded sense of individual autonomy. Examples of this can be witnessed through the concept of a highly restrictive limit to what is considered to be a marriageable age, the notion of motherhood as

a duty, social expectations regarding the gendered division of labour in the domestic sphere, or the conceptualisation of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) and middle-class ideology all discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Many anthropologists of Japan state that women who focus on the self without caring for others are considered *wagamama* (selfish) (Hendry 1993a; Imamura 1987; Lebra 1984; Miller and Bardsley 2005; Moeran and Skov 1993; Tokuhiro 2010). According to Miller and Bardsley, men strongly identify being *wagamama* as the worst characteristic a woman can have (2005: 10-11). On the other hand, in the post-bubble era young generations have shown their individuality, freedom and independence compared to older generations. For example, several scholars suggest that young people express a neoliberal and globalised individualism (cf. Kosugi 2003; discussed in Chapter 4), and especially women cultivate or even modify their bodies -- in what is considered to be a hedonistic perspective -- by working out or having plastic surgery (cf. Miller 2006; discussed in Chapter 5). Therefore, hegemonic gender ideals play a less important role for young people (cf. Shirahase 2005; discussed in Chapter 6). However, the aforementioned scholars also point out that even young people are often required to fit into older gender norms because they cannot be completely free from social expectations. In particular, young mothers are good example of being trapped between 'conservative' and new values (cf. Goldstein-Gidoni 2012; Rosenberger 2013).

Just as hegemonic gender order in Japan may be defined through discourses, ballet is considered to be a gendered and constrained performance in terms of body, movements and techniques. The majority of dance scholars (cf. Foster 1998; Fraleigh 1996; Kirstein 1983; Stokes 1983) and some anthropologists (cf. Aalten 2004; Hanna 1988) argue that professional ballet dancers' bodies are created by observing strict techniques and western

aesthetic norms, as it is considered essential to hone ideal ballet bodies. In particular, ballerinas' figures are required to be thin, light and of fragile appearance, as markers of femininity (Fraleigh 1996; Stokes 1983). Moreover, ballet dancers are required through intensive training to master the basic ballet postures, such as the five positions of the feet and the 180° 'turn out' from hips to legs and feet (Foster 1998; Novack 1993). Several dance scholars, sociologists and anthropologists have found Foucault and Bourdieu's theories of social regulation useful to explain how ballet bodies are objectified as a result of disciplinary training (Foster 1998; Hanna 1988; Wulff 1998a) and of practising technique until reaching the level of *habitus* (Daly 1995; Wainwright and Turner 2004, 2006).

Moreover, several anthropologists point out that professional ballet is commonly perceived as highly gendered because the majority of choreographers or directors are men (Hanna 1988; Novack 1993). Although women often perform the main roles on the stage, they are objectified by the male gaze of these dominant figures. Also, they are reliant upon male dancers for support during the *pas de deux* (dance for two) as a representation of ideal heterosexual relationships. If, as Butler (1988) argues, gender is like a theatre performance where actors follow scripts, then similarly, ballet dancers, especially ballerinas, are asked to perform traditional gender roles such as being passive or fragile so as to represent or reinforce feminised images on the stage. Many feminist dance scholars (Adair 1992; Albright 1997; Daly 1987, 1987/88) and anthropologists (Hanna 1988; Novack 1993) describe ballerinas as victims of patriarchal norms.

Therefore, the aforementioned scholars suggest there is a lack of agency in balletic bodies and movements (cf. Adair 1992; Daly 1987; Hanna 1988). In fact, in order to liberate the

body from codified balletic techniques and objectification and to insert individuality, choreographers began to develop modern dance from the early twentieth century onwards in Europe and the USA (Fraleigh 1996: xxxvii; Kirstein 1983: 239-40; Thomas 2003: 111). For example, the American choreographer, Martha Graham introduced above, tended to choose dancers with strong and heavy bodies, because in her dance it was important to express the conflicted inner self through the body. Her dance technique, ‘construction and release’, consists of off-balance motions allowing dancers to move their bodies dynamically and freely rather than through balanced balletic postures (Thomas 2003: 111), and Graham’s followers still practise this technique. Another well-known American choreographer, Merce Cunningham, a former student of Graham’s, utilises animated bodies rather than balletic elegant bodies, because his choreography involved quicker movements than those in more classical forms (Foster 1998: 248); the influence of his style also remains strong in contemporary modern dance.

Many dance scholars (Foster 1998; Fraleigh 1996; Kirstein 1983: 239-40; Morris 2001), anthropologists and sociologists (cf. Novack 1993; Thomas 2003) point out that modern dance provides dancers with the opportunity to weave freedom and individuality into their performances, both highly valued characteristics in the art form. Therefore, while modern dance is commonly perceived to have no ideal body or bodily technique, in classical ballet there is little autonomous agency in regard to bodies and movement. Daly even states that classical ballet “portrays women as objects of male desire rather than as agents of their own desire” (1987: 17). Therefore, here we return to the original question posed in this Introduction: why do these Japanese women, who are generally described as constrained, choose a disciplined form of dance for their daughters and themselves to learn?

It is true that the majority of feminist oriented dance researchers and dance historians (Burt 1995; Foster 1998; Fraleigh 1996), sociologists and anthropologists (Aalten 2004; Bull 1998; McRobbie 1998; Wainwright and Turner 2004, 2006) claim that ballet is degrading for women, but several dance scholars and anthropologists have claimed that there is also the potential for professional dancers to express their agency through dancing ballet. While the majority do not develop their discussion into how exactly dancers represent their self-identity through ballet; Aalten (2007), for example, examines professional ballet dancers' autonomous agency drawing on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. According to Aalten, dancers often develop eating disorders and ignore pain or injuries, but this is not an indication of passivity. For Aalten it is the dancers' decision to discipline themselves in order to achieve the required techniques and ideal bodies. She argues that dancers purposely ignore their pains and hunger, and continue in this disembodied state until they cannot endure it any longer. I find this focus too narrow. I believe that even if we analyse ballet as a constrained embodied praxis, we can still focus on more positive notions of embodiment such as the expression of a dancer's emotion through movements rather than merely focusing on issues of discipline or injuries. Given this, I agree with her interpretation of ballet dancers as agents with free will rather than passive victims. Novack asserts that the ballerina "embodies and enacts stereotypes of the feminine while she interprets a role with commanding skill, agency, and a subtlety that denies stereotype" (1995: 181). Similarly, in an attempt to challenge the stereotypical image of ballet as a disciplined, passive dance, in this thesis I explore how classical ballet has the power to reflect and re-enforce emotions. Moreover, in this thesis I focus on amateur not professional dancers who dance ballet as *okeikogoto*. The amateur ballet world is dominated by women; most of the teachers (usually former professional dancers) and students are females. Also,

as the majority of my informants were middle-aged beginners, their ballet practice had not reached, nor likely could reach, a stage where it could be assimilated into a bodily *habitus*. Indeed, far from being unconsciously embodied they were struggling to remember even basic ballet movements and postures, both points discussed in Chapter 5. Thus, I contend that amateur ballet is less passive and victimized by patriarchal norms than professional ballet. It is rather a cultural product which one can learn about; ballet itself as a practice and beyond ballet as a form of capital.

Furthermore, although Japanese women are typically depicted as lacking a bounded sense of individual autonomy, one can assert one's own individual agency. According to several anthropologists, some Japanese women are satisfied to 'perform' agency by acting out their expected gender role (Allison 1994; Clammer 1997; Hendry 1993a; Kondo 1990; Lebra 1984). For example, Kondo and Lebra suggest that through playing the role of caregiver or domestic manager women actually control men and empower themselves (1990: 45, 1984: 302). However, as noted above, in the post-bubble era younger generations no longer need to find power within the domestic sphere. They can express more neoliberal and globalised individualism rather than older generations who conform to 'traditional' gender norms.

Indeed, some women (or at least my informants) are dissatisfied with patriarchal norms, and wish to represent themselves through their own actions even within the restrictive confines of accepted gender roles. Similar to my own discussion, Mathews (1996) argues that there are three levels in shaping the self in Japan. Thus, he emphasises that individuals are not only culturally constrained. He explains the deepest level by drawing on Bourdieu's *habitus*; individuals are suppressed by social practices which are beyond any given

individual's conscious self. Then, at the second level individuals are aware of social power, but they cannot help but to follow along with dominant trends on some occasions. Although some do resist this power, most do not because of social pressures. The final level is in regard to individuals being free agents. They choose options available within their culture to fit or shape their sense of self. He explains that most people's actual day-to-day experience is formed from an overlapping of these three categories and suggests the importance of focusing on *ikigai* (something to live for). This is because for Mathews *ikigai* is a key element in shaping a Japanese sense of self. I agree with his idea of *ikigai* as essential because some of my informants indeed saw ballet as *ikigai* in their life. However, despite his rich ethnography, he does not theoretically develop exactly how people pursue *ikigai* as a form of agency or resistance. Therefore, I think that the work of Ortner (2006) on 'serious games' becomes pertinent here because she explains how social actors intend to explore subjectivity even within structures of inequality.

Ortner (2006) argues that although culture constrains social actors, people are partially conscious in regard to their pre-formed social and cultural circumstances. Therefore subjects are not always a part of cultural formation as unquestioning (re)producers but also as producers in that they intend to achieve goals through resistance and transformation as active players and social participants. She defines this relationship of negotiating routine practice and "intentionalized action" as "serious games" and stresses the importance of focusing on the subjectivity of social actors because such games are related to power and intentionality; in other words agency. According to her, while power means domination within or resistance against "social inequality, asymmetry, and force", intentionality is about plans or goals which agents pursue (2006: 126-139). Therefore, Ortner suggests that

not just blanket domination, but even subtle subordination plays a part in an individual's serious game within structure of inequality. This is because they have power to resist dominant practices or discourses and also have their own desires or ideals to achieve aims and enact projects at the individual and day-to-day level of practices. At the micro-level of serious games, action or interaction is about individual intentions or desires that grow out, and concomitantly feed back into, the structures that surround and impinge upon their life, so it is not necessary to show overt actions of resistance (ibid.: 147-153). Similarly, my middle-class informants intended to assert their own agency through consuming ballet within accepted gender roles, but the way of expression differed depending on generations; a key point discussed throughout this thesis.

Therefore, this thesis examines how classical ballet is utilised as a tool by female amateur practitioners to represent empowerment and even resistance against 'traditional' gender norms which, in general, confine them at assistant position as *OLs*, or at home as professional housewives, caretakers and unprofessional educators.

Thesis structure

Chapter 2 begins by exploring the history of ballet and gender role expectations in Japan from the perspective of middle class women. Japanese women are generally expected to take responsibility for managing the household, rearing children and caring for parents and/or parents-in-law. Middle-class women are particularly constrained by these gender roles, and they are expected to remain at home as professional housewives in order to perform their 'duties'. I argue that ballet is consumed by these women in order to resist the hegemonic gender ideals and assert agency. Japanese women consume ballet in their own

way, despite the fact that ballet is perceived to be a western cultural product. Therefore, I examine the extent of ballet's localization in Japan.

Chapter 3 ethnographically examines how mothers try to provide social status to their children, as well as live vicariously through their children's activities. It presents a number of case studies of mothers who take their daughters to ballet classes at the T.K. Ballet Studio, all of whom are professional housewives who left the workforce when they got married or had children. They had no intention of returning to their jobs at least until their children began school because they believed they should look after their children when young. In contrast to the mothers of ballet-learning children examined in Chapter 3, the next three chapters present case studies of women who dance ballet for themselves. I will illustrate how these women tried to assert their agency through dancing ballet at the Hikari and T.K. Ballet Studios. I particularly focus on how self-expression differs between older and young generations. Chapter 4 provides a description of a ballet lesson at the Hikari Ballet Studio. I explore how the hierarchy based on age is enacted by the older dancing women to display their dominance over young more skilled students. Chapter 5 also focuses on women dancers in terms of embodiment. While young women cultivate their appearance to achieve goals such as 'good' proportions, the most interesting point for older generations became how they began to gain an increased awareness of their own bodies and sense of self after starting the lessons. Indeed, for my informants the idea of *akogare* (lit. trans.: a longing for something) was deeply embedded with dancing ballet. While older generations started dancing ballet in order to embody their childhood dreams, young did so in order to produce *akogare* body.

Chapter 6 explores case studies of how dancing women desire to express and often do express their individualism. As discussed in Chapter 2, many women feel constrained by society's expectations to take care of others, whether regarding their job, marriage or family. However, because of neoliberal individualism in the post-bubble era young ones utilise ballet in order to become 'attractive' self whilst older generations try to escape from the hegemonic gender role through ballet. Focusing on inter-generational change I conclude the thesis by highlighting the contribution of my work to ongoing debates of gender and (embodied) selfhood in the anthropology of Japan.

Chapter 2

Middle-class Ethos and Selfhood: A Historical look at the female consumption of ballet in a male dominant society

The women involved with ballet that I encountered during fieldwork could be categorised into four main groups: young unmarried women who worked at companies as *OL* (10%); young ‘professional housewives’ who took their children to ballet class (50%); young housewives who danced ballet by themselves (10%); and middle-aged and older women whose children were grown up (30%). I made the following groupings based on age; young *OL* and mothers were aged between 20 and 30, and middle-aged and older women were aged in their 40s to 60s. These are not hard and fast age associations but more rooted in stage of life as it relates to an approximate age. Thus approximately 90% were ‘professional housewives’ and all of these informants were middle-class, taking into account their educational background, their husbands’ occupations, the areas in which they lived, or even as indicated by appearances such as their taste in clothing or general manner, for example patterns of speech. All of these groups are discussed in my ethnographic chapters from Chapters 3-6.

As underscored in the Introduction, Japanese middle-class women are especially subject to societal gender related restrictions or what I have also called social constraints. For example, middle-class women are often expected to follow ideals of femininity in Japan which are related to having elegant and gentle manners (Hendry 1986; Lebra 1984) appropriate make-up (Ashikari 2003), dress and clothes (Tanaka 1990), language (Lebra

1984; Tanaka 1998) and movements and body shape (Clammer 1995).¹ For example, Ashikari (2003) explains that when in public Japanese middle-class women are expected to wear makeup that whitens their faces. McVeigh points out that female students at one of his fieldsites, Takasu junior college, are formally taught these feminine manners as part of the school's aim to instil gender ideology in them (1996: 64). Yet, as detailed in what follows, amongst middle-class mothers, perhaps the most striking social limitation is the difficulty they have in re-joining the job market after their children have grown up. Although most working-class mothers do not have any choice but to return to work as part-timers for the sake of their household's finances, by contrast middle-class mothers, in spite of their higher educational qualifications, were expected to remain at home in order to perform motherly duties. Nevertheless, I noted that in Japan there is also a rising neoliberal perspective, a focus on individualism especially among young generations. Therefore, in this chapter I will explore how these restrictions on middle-class women alongside the globalising values that affect their behaviour and life choices, and how exactly they relate to women who take up ballet as *okeikogoto* for their daughters and/or themselves.

This chapter is divided into two parts, the first deals with a history of ballet in Japan combined with an examination of 'traditional' gender norms. This is because Japanese women, especially those in the middle-class, have been expected to perform certain social roles in a society where the hegemonic masculine and feminine ideal is dominated. In order to identify the difficulties faced by Japanese women in resuming work after childbirth, I examine how the idea of good wives, wise mothers (*ryōsai kenbo*) and middle-class

¹ According to Sasahara (1999: 206), these feminine characteristics are related to gaining an advantage in finding a husband, and therefore are based on male dominance rather than female autonomy.

expectations (even ideology) have come to affect the aforementioned three different typologies of middle-class women – young unmarried women, mothers, and middle-aged women. Therefore, in this chapter first I discuss how ballet is utilised by middle-class informants to resist constraints and assert agency. However, although Japanese women consume ballet in their own way, ballet is still perceived in Japan to be a western cultural product and thus maintains a privileged, even exotic, status as evidenced by the fact that there is hardly any literature discussing the history of ballet in Japan, unlike the numerous books written by Japanese authors elaborating the history of ballet in Russia, France, England and other western countries (Itoh 2004; Murayama 2001; Sasaki 2008; Suzuki 2002). In the second section of this chapter, therefore, I examine the extent of ballet's localization in Japan by asking to what extent ballet is consumed by women as a globalised *and* localised culture.

Pre- and early post-war era: Ballet for the upper-classes

Ballet was first introduced to Japan in the Meiji-era (1868-1912) when the country was aiming to become westernized. After two hundred years of relative isolation from the rest of the world, Japan failed to maintain its seclusion policy from the Western powers due to its military weakness.² Thus, the new government emphasised creating *fukoku kyōhei* (a rich country and a strong military) and *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment), as part of being a modern industrialised nation (Hunter 1989: 8, 15-28; Uno 1991: 37). While more men began working as wage labourers at offices or factories as opposed to agriculturalists, most women continued working throughout their lives as farmers or helpers in small shops (Ochiai 1997). Moreover, although they were clearly a minority, since the 1870s young unmarried daughters from poor peasant families increasingly began

² The only official exceptions to the policy of seclusion were Holland, China and other East Asian countries.

to work as low wage labourers at textile factories in order to help with their immediate or extended family's finances (Hunter 2008; Kawashima 1995: 273-274; Tsurumi 1984: 4-5, 1990).³ By the 1910s some middle-class women who were called *shokugyō fujin* (working women) began working white-collar jobs that ranged from being typists to doctors (Fukaya 1981). However, in spite of increasing number of *shokugyō fujin* during this era, the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal, which was based on a mixture of Confucian morality and Western upper-class ideas of female domesticity (particularly German Protestantism), spread among women regardless of their class (Smith 1987:7). This is because the government considered the family system to be essential for building a modern nation-state structure and had changed its laws regarding the family to reflect this. Through these changes the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology became a social mantra, stressing the importance for women to become good wives and wise mothers in order to protect the *ie* (household/family system) (Fukaya 1981: 13). Moreover, as I discuss further below, the ideology also compelled women to educate children in order to be 'civilised' and build national strength (Uno 2005). The Meiji government considered it important to civilise (in large part westernize) the Japanese polis in order to gain parity with the West and create a strong nation. They believed that supporting the largely Enlightenment ideal of educated mothers would lead to the next generation becoming civilised. This was based on the idea that "great mothers equal great children and great children equal a great nation" (Uno 2005: 499). As a result, mothers were asked to educate their children at home in order to create "the nation's future leaders"

³ According to these scholars, they were sent away by parents to be internal migrant workers (*dekasegi*) because their families could not afford to support them at home, as both taxes and rent were a struggle for labouring families. However, Hunter stresses that although this was generally true, the reason for *dekasegi* was not simply poverty. There was also limited work for local agriculture labourers in some regions prompting nation internal labour migration. Indeed, a few of the female workers were actually from middle-class families labouring to acquire work experience. In sum, *dekasegi* conditions and motivations were multifaceted (2008: 61-62, 83-87).

(Uno 1993: 60).⁴

As another example of *bunmei kaika* under this social system, near the end of Meiji era in 1911, the Japanese Imperial Theatre (*teikoku-gekijyō*) was founded with the purpose of demonstrating Japan's newly acquired 'modernity' to the world. It was Japan's first Western-style theatre. It had an Italian Renaissance influence and its repertoire included not only Japanese but also western arts such as opera, classical music and ballet. In the same year, the first Japanese classical ballet was performed in this theatre.⁵ The following year Giovanni Vittorio Rossi, a former dancer of La Scala in Milan, was invited by the Imperial Theatre to be its director and he became Japan's first ballet teacher. However, since he could not attract large enough audiences to the theatre he was forced to leave in 1916. Many of his students had rebelled against his strict character and training and after he left the theatre, they shifted to modern dance.⁶ As a result, classical ballet almost disappeared in Japan.

However, in 1922 Anna Pavlova visited Japan on a world tour and ballet once again came into the limelight. She stayed twenty days and her performances at the Imperial Theatre included her most famous solos from "The Dying Swan". Many Japanese audiences were highly impressed by her artistry.⁷ A few years later in 1927, a Russian aristocrat, Elena Pavlova, founded the first Japanese ballet company in Kamakura city. She had immigrated to Japan in 1919 because of the Russian Revolution and took up a post as a teacher of

⁴ In fact, teaching *ryōsai kenbo* ideals was part of the school curriculum in girls' schools (Fukaya 1981).

⁵ Classical music (1879) and Opera (1894) were introduced to Japan for the first time.

⁶ One of his students, Baku Ishii, became a pioneer of modern dance in Japan.

⁷ All tickets were sold out before the performance although the most expensive ticket cost 15 yen (approximately 100,000 yen (416 British pounds during my fieldwork in 2007) if thought of in terms of today's currency).

ballroom dancing. However, following Anna Pavlova's visit, more Japanese started dancing ballet, thus Elena Pavlova decided to become a ballet teacher although she was neither related to Anna Pavlova nor professionally trained as a ballerina. Nevertheless, most of the Japanese professional ballet dancers who trained during the pre-war era were her students (Kawashima 2012). In 1933, one of her students, Akiko Tachibana, founded the first Japanese run ballet company called the Tachibana Ballet *Kenkyūjo* (academy). In 1936, another Russian dancer named Olga Sapphire arrived. Confusingly, her actual name was Olga Pavlova! Therefore it is often said that the three Pavlovas influenced the early history of Japanese ballet (cf. Watanabe 2013). The third Pavlova came to Japan after her marriage to a Japanese diplomat in Russia. She taught ballet at the *Nihon Gekijō* (Japanese Theatre). Since she had graduated from the national ballet academy and had danced as a professional ballet dancer in Russia, she is considered to be the first proper ballet teacher in Japan (Ishida 2007).

During the Second World War everything related to the West was banned by the government and ballet was no exception. During the post-war American Occupation (1945-1952)⁸ it was inevitable for Japan to again be influenced by western ideas and things, especially coming from the USA, and again 'the West' was considered superior by the lion's share of upper and middle-class Japanese, much as during the Meiji period. In 1946 the first full-length performance of *Swan Lake* was performed by Japanese dancers and their beautiful performance attracted large audiences; though perhaps this was because people lacked access to many leisure activities during the war (Kawamichi 1972: 23). This

⁸ The occupation lasted until 1952 and it was "the first foreign occupation of Japan in its long history" (Hunter 1989: 32).

led to the first period of popularity for ballet in the post-war period, nevertheless until the 1950s the majority of ballet schools aimed to create professional ballet dancers and ballet was exclusively watched and studied by the upper-classes. Even middle-class women, who are the main consumers of ballet in contemporary Japan, as noted in the introductory chapter, could not consume it because of their involvement with work and as housewife duties a result of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology. During the early post-war era almost all females – from teenage girls to married women – continued working. Indeed, until the 1950s nearly 50% of Japanese women were farmers. Moreover, as mentioned above, since the Meiji-era an increasing number of women were employed in wage labour, and during the war from the Manchurian Incident in 1932 to the conclusion of the Pacific war in 1945 women served in Japanese heavy industries (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan 1997).⁹ Indeed, apart from the upper-classes who could further their education or hire maids for housework (Uno 1991), women had little free time in this era.

Moreover, the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal survived through the post-war era and therefore lowered the status of women. Despite the fact that the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology compelled women to educate their children in order to create the nation's future leaders as mentioned above, a woman was not seen as a member of her husband's *ie* until she had added children to it. The *ie* system was based on a samurai family model and was supported by Confucian ideology (Blood 1967; Fukutake 1981; Hendry 1981; Kondo 1990). The most important element of the *ie* was its continuity; in order to guarantee this, under the Meiji civil code the

⁹ <http://www5.cao.go.jp/seikatsu/whitepaper/h9/wp-pl97-000i1.html>, accessed January 2015.

eldest son was usually chosen as heir,¹⁰ thus the *ie* was a patriarchal and primogenital system. Every child except the eldest son was expected to move from their natal *ie* after marriage, and every daughter was required to move into her spouse's household as a young bride (*yome*). Since *yome* was the only person entering into this pre-existing household from another, her position was the lowest. Because of the patriarchal nature of society, providing children (preferably sons) to the *ie* as successors was a new bride's most important duty; until then, her position as *yome* was unstable. Moreover, even after giving birth to a son, under the Meiji civil code she remained a household's lowest-ranking member, even subordinate to her own male children (Kondo 1990: 170). Because of this lowly status, until the *ie* system was abolished and women gained legal equality with men in the 1947 constitution of Japan (albeit both on paper more than in practice), women did not even have property rights (*zaisanken*). According to Ochiai, female workers in family businesses did not receive a share of the business or its profits (1997: 16-7). Even the salary of middle-class *shokugyō fujin* was only 60% compared to that of men (Okumura 2008),¹¹ thus the majority of women could not afford to consume ballet at this time. Since in this era the majority of ballet schools were aiming to create professional ballet dancers, people who began studying ballet during this era were wealthy single men in their 20s or women in their mid-teens, and a few girls from privileged families (cf. Kawashima 2012; Watanabe 2013).

¹⁰ As an exception, if a family had no sons, a daughter's spouse was adopted as a successor and moved into the wife's house as a *yōshi*. If there were no children at all in the family, a successor was found through adoption. Blood connection was thus not the highest priority for succession, although it was preferable (Hendry 2003: 28).

¹¹ The point here is to underscore gender disparity but not to necessarily paint Japan as particularly patriarchal in this era. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), even in 2011 the gender wage gap can be found in almost all countries. For a more detail, see <http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/genderwagegap.htm>, accessed December 2014.

Post-war era and professional housewives; Ballet for a rising middle-class and consumer culture

Since the 1950s more Japanese from lower socio-economic strata in relation to the upper-classes have been able to consume ballet. This trend is largely related to the increase of middle-class professional housewives (*senyō shufu*). During the post-war period of Japan's rapid economic growth (1955-73), the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal was used to support the transition of Japan's economic structure from heavy industry to the service sector. The *salaryman*, white-collar employees of large companies, emerged as the ideal occupation of 'the new middle class' during this time. Unlike previous periods in which the ascribed status associated with the position of a given family played a dominant role in terms of social status, even without a prestigious family background company employees could climb the social ladder if they were sufficiently educated. Therefore, as Vogel states, in this new era "a son's life is more determined by his education and the organization to which he belongs than the size of his inheritance" (1971: 38).

At this time a *salaryman's* position became a symbol of social mobility, and they were considered to have desirable jobs by most Japanese. Another attractive aspect of this new *salaryman* lifestyle was that they worked at large companies which in turn provided "security, regularity, and assurance of advancement with age," in contrast to the sometimes precarious position of self-employed people in family businesses (Vogel 1971: 267-272).¹² Furthermore, only *salarymen* and upper-class people could purchase new goods, such as the 'three treasures'; in the late 1950s people yearned for the three S's, namely a *senttiki* (washing machine), *suihanki* (electric rice cooker) and *sōjiki* (vacuum cleaner); by the late

¹² However in 2006, large companies, where the *salarymen* work, made up only 0.3 per cent of the total number of Japanese firms, while small businesses (of less than twenty employees) occupied 87 per cent (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2006; see Hendry 2003: 169-71).

1960s the treasures had evolved into the three K's, made up of the *kūrā* (air-conditioner), *kā* (car) and *kārā terebi* (colour television) (Condry 2004: 29). Consequently, the *salaryman* became a symbol of the new middle class and of a “bright new life” (ibid.: 27).

A *salaryman* was considered an ideal marriage partner by women because their pay allowed their wives to stay at home as middle-class professional housewives (Osawa 2002: 259). According to Vogel, professional housewives can be defined as domestic workers with “a lifetime career requiring training, special skills, and endless devotion” (1978: 16). However, professional housewives did not appear in large numbers until the 1950s because, as argued earlier, women were working in agriculture, family business, or wartime efforts. Ochiai points out that “women did not begin to participate in the workforce after the war; rather, they began to stay at home. After the war women became increasingly oriented towards the role of housewife” despite their new constitutional equal rights (1997: 14).

In other words, rapid economic growth made it possible for men to become middle-class *salarymen* and their wives to become professional housewives. While *salarymen* were required to work hard as *kigyōsenshi* (company warriors) in order to support the Japanese economy, their wives were expected to support them by staying at home as domestic managers and child-rearers. This led to the development of a strongly held viewpoint, especially among middle-class people, that modern life ‘naturally’ involved a gendered division of labour (forming a hegemonic gender ideology), such that women should be at home and men should be at work (Ashikari 2003; Hendry 1993a; Iwao 1993; Kondo 1990;

Lebra 1976; Ochiai 1997; Tamanoi 1990; Yoda 2000).¹³

Nevertheless, during this period the importance of becoming and remaining a housewife was an ideal stressed and striven for because such marriages provided a form of social mobility for women as well, and more women stayed at home as housewives as compared to any other period in modern Japanese history. However, it is important to note that even during the period of rapid economic growth, the percentage of professional housewives did not exceed 38 percent of the total population (Osawa 2002: 260). The majority of women were not able to stay at home because their husbands could not earn enough money to support their families. Therefore, the emergence of the professional housewife was strongly linked to a husband's social position and income (Hendry 1993a: 235), and becoming one was seen as a privileged symbol of the middle-class during this period. According to several scholars, professional housewives were satisfied with their positions because, as compared to working-class wives and mothers, they could enjoy a reasonable quality of life and stay at home (Hendry *ibid.*: 239; Vogel 1971).

These professional housewives who now had time and wealth began taking up hobbies for themselves, but because of *ryōsai kenbo* ideology these were limited to something useful for wifely or mother duties, such as cooking or sewing (Cwierka 1998; Kondo 1990: 281). Also, others began taking their children, especially daughters, to *okeikogoto*. In particular, enrolling their daughters in ballet was considered to be a privilege, along with piano or tea ceremony classes, because western arts as well as traditional Japanese arts were deemed to

¹³ On the other hand, working-class women could not afford to stay at home and had to work for the sake of their household, as will be discussed below.

be a part of elite culture. Parents expected their daughters to gain cultural capital through ballet or these other *okeikogoto* in order to find husbands rather than having the goal to become professional dancers as mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis. However, being a ballerina was a dream for many girls in this era because it was a fantasy that was promoted in the media. For example many ballet stories appeared in girls' *manga* (comic books), with titles such as *Arabesque or Swan*, and on the covers of many girls' magazines Japanese models posed as ballerinas. In 1972, the ballet soap opera *Akai kutsu* (The Red Shoes)¹⁴ was broadcast (TBS: Tokyo Broadcasting System) and the popularity of ballet flourished amongst ordinary girls, although in fact only a few girls from urban upper and new-middle-class families could study ballet.¹⁵

When the rapid growth era ended in the early 1990s Japan experienced an intense economic recession. Nevertheless as discussed in the previous chapter, paradoxically, the majority of people have, issues of personal choice aside, been able to consume ballet. This is because in 1992 the government established a new law (*jitansokushinhō*) in order to reduce long working hours and increase leisure time. It also reduced the six-day work-week to five days. People started enjoying their newfound leisure time and made more varied lifestyle choices. Consequently, the majority of people were able to consume what was heretofore thought of

¹⁴ This soap opera is probably named after Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale 'The Red Shoes', or perhaps after the British film of the same name based on his stories.

¹⁵ Indeed, ballet is often cited by the state as an indication of modernisation or globalisation as noted in Chapter 1. Western art forms require both economic and cultural capital, thus when a nation becomes wealthy, the number of people who learn classical ballet increases in parallel. In fact, the number of Japanese dancers who attend "The Prix de Lausanne" has increased dramatically since 1980s. The Prix de Lausanne is a dance competition started in 1972 in order to give an opportunity to young 'amateur' dancers of all nationalities aged 15 to 17 to be able to learn ballet at a prestigious ballet school, such as the British Royal Ballet School or American Ballet Theatre. The competition's entrants are highly indicative of a nation's economic situation. For example, in the early days many candidates were European, then the Japanese dominated, and now the majority of candidates are from China and Latin America. For a more detail, see <http://www.prixdelausanne.org>, accessed January 2015.

as elite culture (Martinez 1998: 5) and these consumption patterns were considered trendy (Tobin 1992b: 36). Thus, nowadays practising *okeikogoto* has become a less privileged activity. Indeed, now several sociologists and anthropologists have started researching increasing leisure activities in Japan through sports such as martial arts (Chapman 2004; Cox 2002; Inoue 1998), baseball (Buruma 1996; Kelly 1998; Kiku 2006), football (Chiesa 2002; Ebishima and Yamashita 2006; Horne 2002; Watts 1998; Whiting 1977, 1989), drinking culture (Ben-Ari 2002; Linhart 1998) or hobbies such as karaoke (Kelly 2002), *sadō* (Chiba 2010; Kato 2004) as well as dance (Goldstein-Gidoni and Daliot-Bul 2002 and see Introduction). Learning ballet became a less privileged activity enabling it to be consumed by common people, although it has continued to some extent to be considered part of western high culture thus retaining a high cultural capital cachet. As a result, young unmarried working women as well as professional housewives who quit their jobs after marriage began consuming ballet from the post-bubble era onwards. Indeed, the increase of consuming ballet was related to the change of working styles amongst middle-class women.

As a result of slow economic growth women's purchasing power weakened. Consequently, regardless of their class, most unmarried women once again began to join the workforce after graduating from school (Brinton 1993). According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare,¹⁶ in 2008 97.3% of female university graduates were recruited into the job market. These full-time graduates were divided into two tracks, executive (*sōgōshoku*) and general (*ippanshoku*) in most big Japanese companies which had more than 5,000 employees. While the executive track means “employees that are rotated to various departments with the purpose of giving them broad-based experience and knowledge,” the

¹⁶ <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2008/05/h0516-1.html>, accessed January 2011.

general track only entails “support-level clerical work” (Fujimura-Fanselow 1995: 145). This system was introduced after the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) in 1985 (Matsunaga 2000: 22).¹⁷ Now, the executive track is open, on paper, to university graduates regardless of gender.¹⁸ And, in theory, these people are trained to become future executives and are expected to stay with the firms as lifetime employees (ibid.: 22). On the other hand, as in the past, employees on the general track consist mainly of female graduates from high school and junior college, and even some with university qualifications.¹⁹ They are called *OL* and usually work from 9am to 5pm without having extra work. This is because their tasks consist of “simple, repetitive, clerical work” without any expert knowledge, management responsibility and/or the possibility of promotion (Ogasawara 1998: 27-8). In other words, through the two track system the government has persuaded companies to recruit more women in order to support Japanese economy, but as the system functions it still keeps the majority of women in low positions.

These young *OL* are not regarded as primary workers, but they do have money and free time. And, this being the case, many have begun learning ballet since the 1990s. As pointed out in the introductory chapter, despite the boring features of their jobs, they are clearly seen as powerful consumers of goods and leisure (Chen 2012; Ueno and Nobuta 2011). For

¹⁷ The law was enacted to give women equal opportunities with men, so prohibits “discrimination against women in vocational training, fringe benefits, retirement and dismissal” (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2011). However, in terms of recruitment, job assignment and promotion it only requires employers to ‘exhort’ to treat women equally with men, only as a moral obligation. In sum, there are no legal consequences for discrimination against women on these latter points, and thus the law does not put females in the same position as male workers. The government considered that as Japanese companies were based on a seniority system any legal sanction in regard to the issues above would negatively affect most companies (Akamatsu 1985: 244-245; Ogiwara 1985: 53).

¹⁸ According to Matsunaga, although employees are supposed to be divided into two tracks by educational level rather than gender, in the past employers preferred to hire male university graduates for the executive track (2000: 123).

¹⁹ Some male university graduates have recently sought work in the general track, because they say it will be less demanding and there will be less chance of being transferred to another region.

example, the kinds of clothes *OL* wear and the kinds of activities they do after 5 p.m. or on holiday are constantly examined in women's magazines or on television. In fact, according to Yamada (1999), *OL* are categorised as one of the wealthiest groups in Japanese society because many *OL* are 'parasite singles' who live with their parents without paying for their food or rent. During my fieldwork, for instance, I found that many of these young women enrolled in ballet lessons through their newfound wealth. Moreover, in the post-bubble era young unmarried women express their individualism not only through their hedonistic consumption of goods but through the perception of and increased attention to their own bodies (cf. Miller 2006). Many young informants were attempting to 'cultivate' their appearance such as achieving upright posture in order to be a more 'attractive' self. Indeed, in some women's magazines (for example the popular magazine as *Body Plus*), ballet was introduced as one of the exercises which could help one attain such a body (cf. Funakawa 2007: 20-7),²⁰ as is discussed in Chapter 5.

Other consumers of ballet during this era through to today consist of three different types of middle-class professional housewives; young mothers who are able to afford to take their daughters to ballet, and young and middle-aged married women who have started dancing ballet themselves. These middle-class housewives have a higher education background than *OL* and therefore the majority of them used to work in the executive track positions. However, most women quit their full-time jobs after marriage or having children despite the fact that revisions to the EEOL laws (2000) declare gender equality in order to protect female workers from discrimination. It is true that in the post-bubble era the number of full-

²⁰ According to Tanaka (1990), Japanese women's magazines are used as guides by women in attaining cultural capital and a certain femininity because they explain how to wear elegant clothes or make-up.

time working mothers are increasing, but in reality they still remain low at around 30% a point that will be further discussed in Chapter 6. These female workers are not only those on the general track who are expected to leave the company after getting married (*kotobuki taisha*), but also those in the executive track who are expected to stay with the firms as lifetime employees (Brinton 1993).

The most common reason for executive track women leaving work is related to the continuing influence of the older gender norms related to *ryōsai kenbo*. Several scholars point out that in the post-bubble era younger generations have different views in regard to hegemonic gender ideals. They place less emphasis on the importance of ‘traditional’ ideology (cf. Ehara 2004; Shirahase 2005; discussed detail in Chapter 6). Indeed, the belief in the gendered domestic division of labour has declined from 50.4% (1977) to 16.1% (2002a) (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan).²¹ However, there are still strong views towards wives about who is responsible for most of household chores and childcare even if both spouses work (Taga 2003).²² Hence, upon childbirth some women do not have any other choice than to leave paid employment. Yet another reason women leave the higher echelons of the employment system is female inequality within the legal system. There is compelling evidence of a lack of support for women from not only spouses but also companies and the state, in terms of rearing children and contributing to housework. For example, in companies there is a lack of legal sanctions or inadequacies in labour legislation, especially in childcare laws. The “childcare leave law” was revised in 2009 to allow both men and women to take leave from work until a child reached the age of one

²¹ According to the White Paper on National Life (<http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h14/h14-danjo/index.html>, accessed 6 January 2015).

²² According to the author, women who are working full-time do roughly 4 hours of housework and childcare a day, whilst men do less than 30 minutes.

year and 2 months (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2009).²³ Although there seems to be apparent improvements in the law, there are still problems including low wages for women. Although a certain level of wage is guaranteed, the tax system penalises working mothers -- with the exception of extremely low-paid workers (Iwahori 1999; Yoda 2000), moreover women usually have lower wages than their husbands to start off. Therefore, women cannot avoid taking childcare leave themselves since their wages are not enough to cover the maintenance of their household. Actually, only 0.5% of male employees whose wives had just given birth take leave compared to 72.3% for women (2005).²⁴

There is also a lack of a sufficient number of *hoikuen* (nursery schools) (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2012).²⁵ In Japan, there are two types of nursery schools: *hoikuen* (*hoikujo*) and *yōchien*. While *hoikuen* accepts children from birth or 1 year old to 6 and looks after them for 11 hours, *yōchien* is for children aged 3 or 4 to 6 and cares for them only for 4 to 7 hours. In general, *hoikuen* allows only children whose parents are working and the fees are more expensive than *yōchien*, but the price varies depending on the region, the income of parents, *etcetra*. In smaller centres they are often mixed and more flexible.²⁶ In 2012, only 25.3% of children below aged three are in *hoikuen* and 24,825 children were waiting (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2012). This shortage has a negative effect on working women whose husbands hardly ever cooperate with macro level expectations. Moreover, even if a *hoikuen* is immediately available, they have specific working hours (most of them close at 18:00), and also charge expensive fees (approximately 50,000 yen

²³ <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/topics/2009/07/090701-3.pdf>, accessed June 2013.

²⁴ <http://headlines.yahoo.co.jp/hl?a=20060809-00000087-mai-soci>, accessed February 2011.

²⁵ <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/houdou/2r9852000002khid-att/2r9852000002khju.pdf>, accessed June 2013.

²⁶ For a more detail about the differences between *hoikuen* (*hoikujo*) and *yōchien*, see the website of University of Tokyo <http://www.iam.u-tokyo.ac.jp/hoiku/01.html>, accessed January 2015.

(£208) (ibid.). Consequently, many women leave their jobs after having children because these laws are not sufficient to keep women in paid employment.

While some return to their jobs after one year of maternity leave, the majority of women regardless of class stay at home as housewives, at least until their children become three years old. This is because of the *sansai-shinwa* (the myth of three years old) in which a child's development demands a close relationship with their mother and appears to be related to this belief although there is no evidence to support it (see Ochiai 1997: 128-130). For example, in 2002 68.2% of married women in Japan stay at home without a job while the child is under three years of age (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan 2002b).²⁷ Indeed, the female labour force participation exhibits an M-shaped curve, with peaks in the age of early 20s and late 40s. However, according to a governmental survey, in reality nearly half (47.1%) of mothers re-join the workforce and 8.8% were looking for jobs when their children reach the ages between age 3 and 5, because they cannot afford to stay at home without working (ibid.). Many of these women are working-class mothers who do not have any other options apart from working as part-timers (*pāto* workers) for financial reasons²⁸ despite the fact that *pāto* workers earn low wages and suffer from a lack of job benefits such as pensions, sick-pay and job security (Broadbent 2001; Hendry 2003: 168; Matsunaga 2000: 20; Saso 1990: 154).

By contrast, middle-class mothers often do not return to the workforce even when their

²⁷ According to the White Paper on National Life (http://www5.cao.go.jp/seikatsu/whitepaper/h18/10_pdf/01_honpen/pdf/06ksha0203.pdf, accessed 6 January 2015).

²⁸ According to Ushijima, women are more likely to work if the family has loans and husbands have a lower educational background and/or income (1995: 138-141).

children reach three in spite of their higher educational qualifications and professional careers (Hendry 1993a; Ochiai 1997).²⁹ Middle-class mothers have no urgent reason to work because they have no financial obligations to do so. Most of them are married to highly-educated men who have high salaries, so an additional household income is not needed. As noted in the Introduction, while some middle-class mothers accept their socially inscribed gender role and are satisfied with performing domestic work such as managing household finances as professional housewives, others especially those from the younger generation wish to express agency through their own actions including returning to the job market. However, it is difficult because middle-class mothers prefer full-time jobs to *pāto* work because middle-class women expect to have self-satisfying, fulfilling careers and to create social connections through their jobs compared to *pāto* workers who work for income rather than gaining skills, social experience or just to kill time (cf. Aoshima 2007; Iwao 1993; Lebra 1984). Furthermore, because of the aforementioned tax system and the pre-bubble era's system of seniority it is hard for women to re-enter employment. For example, the seniority system is not based on one's ability but on the year of entering the company. Thus employers are often hesitant to re-employ women who are expected to attain high position and salary due to their age. This practice makes it difficult for women to return to their original jobs, and their choice of employment is often limited to part-time jobs. Therefore, middle-class mothers choose not to return to work unless the job is very good. Brinton points out that "Japanese women who can afford to stay at home are likely to do so" (1993: 179), and this still applies to women in 2000s (cf. Aoshima 2007; Nakano 2014).

²⁹ On the other hand, middle-class women in other industrialised countries are more likely to continue their careers because of a high salary and status at the workplace (McRae 1993; Smeaton 2006).

Consequently, some young mothers who have financial power but are confined at home due to older gender norms and unequal laws, try to assert their agency through their children's activities. While some *kyōiku mama* make efforts to enrol their children in higher education in order to secure their future in a neo-liberal competitive society, other mothers are more interested in taking their children to *okeikogoto* including ballet. Although during the rapid economic growth era only middle class housewives enrolled their daughters into ballet lessons – mainly in order to make them an attractive marriage candidate – the economic recession has made it possible for lower class mothers to take their daughters to ballet. According to Sasagawa (2004) and Sugiyama (1996), through *okeikogoto* current mothers are more interested in these outings as ways of releasing their own pent-up emotions, exchanging information in regard to childrearing, as well as enriching their children's lives. Although their analyses can apply to some degree to my mother informants who observe their daughters' ballet lessons, the problem is that none of these scholars have focused on girls' *okeikogoto* despite the fact that girls are more involved with *okeikogoto* than boys, as pointed out in the previous chapter. During fieldwork, amongst nursery-school girls, dancing ballet was one of the three most popular *okeikogoto* along with learning to play the piano and speaking English. Therefore, in Chapter 3 I investigate why young middle-class mothers enrol their daughters in ballet as an *okeikogoto*.

Compared to the women described above, a number of young middle-class mothers do not want to live vicariously through their children, and tend to express their individualism through own activities including ballet. According to Goldstein-Gidoni (2012), in the post-bubble era influenced by the unmarried young women there are increasing numbers of young mothers who enjoy fashion or cultivate own their beauty or appearance from the

hedonistic perspectives. The Japanese seem to relish coining new phrases to aptly summarise the characteristics of a particular societal group. These ‘new’ type of mothers are called *oshare mama* (fashionable mothers) or *celebu mama* (the abbreviation for celebrity mothers),³⁰ and they are often introduced in female fashion magazines such as *Very* or *Sakura*. These mothers commonly consider ‘traditional’ types of mothers who are absorbed in childcare without bothering about own appearance as frightening (cf. Yamane 2008). During fieldwork in 2006-2007, in fact I was surprised to see many very fashionably dressed mothers shopping in town with children in pushchairs. There is another new type of mother called *karisuma shufu* (charisma housewife), and they are not only housewives wearing beautiful clothes and make-up like *oshare mama*, but business women who are considered to be domestic work experts. For example, one of the well-known *karisuma shufu* is Kurihara Harumi. She is married, has children and is a cooking expert (*ryōri kenkyūka*). In other words, *karisuma shufu* express some financial independence while still being housewives, and Goldstein-Gidoni (2012) points out that many young women admire *karisuma shufu* as their role models.

Both the *oshare mama* and *karisuma shufu* are mothers who not only care about their children but enjoy their lives like unmarried women. In particular, *karisuma shufu* are involved in a range of activities as well as childcare. However, the ideal *oshare mama* and *karisuma shufu* are still first and foremost housewives. For example Kurihara constantly emphasises in magazine interviews or on TV that she prioritizes being a professional housewife over being a cooking specialist.³¹ As noted above, in the post-bubble era there

³⁰ Originally, *celeb mama* meant only mothers who were actual celebrities, but recently ordinary wealthy mothers who dress up and have gorgeous lives like celebrities are called *celeb mama*, as well.

³¹ As an example of her interviews, see http://www.yutori.co.jp/en/about_harumi, accessed December 2014.

are more full-time working mothers than before, but the majority of mothers are not completely free from older gender norms. Therefore, Goldstein-Gidoni (2012) and Rosenberg (2013) consider young mothers in the post-bubble era to be trapped between old and new values. Indeed, the majority of young dancing mothers were *oshare mama*, thus ballet provided these women with a space to cultivate their appearance for own pleasure while liberating themselves from hegemonic gender ideals, points I return to in Chapters 4 to 6.

In the case of middle-aged professional housewives, they tend to conform to the older gender norms when compared to younger generations (cf. Ehara 2004). However, at least some of my informants tried to assert agency through their own activities including ballet. As pointed out in the introductory chapter, after their children have grown up, middle-class middle-aged women are socially allowed to spend time on themselves because compared to young mothers their motherly duties are diminished. Moreover, before they are required to look after elder family members, middle-aged women are afforded the time to enjoy purposeful and self-fulfilling pursuits (Iwao 1993; Rosenberger 1996). Rosenberger suggests that women using their free time to pursue their own interests is a very middle-class activity. Dancing ballet is regarded this way by some women because compared to working-class mothers, who lack free time and capital, middle-aged professional housewives can afford to freely search for fulfilment by themselves.

Middle-aged women have increasingly started to dance ballet after adult beginners' classes began in the late 1990s. For example, one of the best known ballet studios, Chacott, opened an adult beginners' class using a 'pay-as-you-go' system in 1997. This attracted housewives

as well as working women who could not attend lessons every week.³² Following Chacott, many small ballet studios, such as T.K Ballet Studio and Hikari Ballet Studio, where I did fieldwork, opened adult classes in the early 2000s. From the dawn of the new millennia, middle-aged women have become more numerous than unmarried dancing *OL*. Middle aged women who *akogare* dancing ballet in their childhood, but who could not take it up during the period of rapid economic growth, have now started dancing ballet in their late 40s to 60s.

The popularity of ballet among middle-aged women could be seen in the media as well in the 2000s, which might have influenced them in turn. For example, several ballet dramas focusing on middle-aged women have been shown recently on television. In 2005, the ballet soap opera, *Mama ha ballerina* (my mother is a ballerina), was on the television during the day (TBS). The story was based on a popular ballet *manga*. In 2006, the ballet soap opera named *Primadam* (*pri* is an abbreviated version of prima donna and madam is self-explanatory), was on television at a more popular time, ten o'clock in the evening (NTV: *Nihon Television*). This drama was based on the book, *Ballet wo yaritai* (I want to Dance Ballet) which talks about a passion for ballet amongst adult beginners (Sasagawa and Ikeda 2002). In 1972 the heroine of the ballet soap opera, *Akai kutsu* (mentioned above), was a teenage girl who aimed to be a professional ballet dancer. But this time, the heroine was a lower-middle class housewife in her 40s who had two children, which reflects the current popularity of ballet among middle-aged women.

³² As noted in Chapter 1, Chacott ballet studio is located in Shibuya, and opened the first adult beginners' class in 1992, but the students had to pay fees three months in advance. For a more detail, see <http://www.chacott-jp.com>, accessed April 2013.

Today, middle-aged women who are keen on leisure activities are called *dankaino-sedai*, literally meaning the ‘mass generation’ or ‘lump generation’, known in English as the baby-boom generation. In Japan, this phrase refers to people born between 1947 and 1951. As this cohort has risen to prominence they have been subject to an increasing media focus in Japan, and articles about them can be seen in newspapers almost every day. This trend seems to have begun in the 1980s, when middle-aged women were called *obatarian*.³³ They were perceived to behave shamelessly in public and were publicly criticised by the media and wider society, for example for taking seats on public transport without waiting in line.³⁴ In contrast to the 1980s’ *obatarian*, the current generation of *dankaino-sedai*, seem to be more respected by the media. One of the reasons for this is the fact that they are greater in number, being part of the baby-boom generation, and thus have more economic power than the *obatarian* had.

The influence on society in general of this newly-powerful group seems to be mirrored in the amateur ballet world as well. As mentioned in the Introduction, until recently it was unusual for middle-aged women to enjoy *okeikogoto*, and indeed before commencing fieldwork in 2006 I had never imagined that middle-aged women could have been enjoying ballet as adult beginners. Dancing ballet had always been seen as a hobby for young girls to take up. Although since the 1990s some middle-aged beginners began dancing, at least until the early 2000s, such activities had been popularly considered *mittomonai* (disgraceful or shameful) by both men and women, because of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology. Since ballet is commonly embedded with images and imaginaries of youth and beauty, a point elaborated

³³ The word *obatarian* first appeared as the main female characters in Katsuhiko Hotta’s eponymous *manga* in 1988. The term combines *oba* (abbreviation of *obasan* - middle-aged women) and battalion. Hotta portrays *obatarian* as middle-aged women who behave outrageously in public.

³⁴ In 1989 the word *obatarian* was chosen as one of the year’s *ryukogo* (popular words).

in Chapter 5, it was certainly not acceptable within larger society for middle-aged women to dance by themselves in leotards and even tutus on stage! This represents the situation that *dankaino-sedai* are more socially accepted to express themselves compared to previous generations.

Several theorists in the West argue that leisure is used by women to resist dominant discourses, such as class, race and gender (Clarke and Critcher 1985; Deem 1999; Green 1998; Rojek 1997; Shaw 2001a, 2001b; Wearing 1990, 1995, 1998). For example, Wearing claims that leisure provides “relative freedom” for women and also has the “potential to break down gendered cultural prescriptions” because women can spend time on and make space for themselves (1998: 59). In particular, amateur ballet in Japan is almost exclusively a female world (discussed in Chapter 5), thus in concordance with Wearing I discuss how women take up ballet as a hobby to escape from or subvert indirectly the hegemonic gender ideals. Some aforementioned scholars argue that class, age and gender constrain women from accessing leisure activities. For example, Clarke and Critcher explain that in England “men dominate leisure physically and culturally” because women are expected to perform their gendered domestic role (1985: 176, 224-225). However in the case of Japan, middle-class wives have greater control over their husbands’ salaries, as mentioned in the Introduction. Their husbands tend not to mind their wives spending their money on leisure activities, as long as they fulfil their domestic duties and childrearing responsibilities. This is also because salaried men in Japan are very busy at work and have little time to engage in leisure activities of their own. Therefore, despite several restrictions on Japanese women, middle-class women are much freer to enjoy leisure activities compared to their western counterparts.

Successive Japanese governments have deeply instilled in women the need to play the domestic role of managing the household and caring for the family. For example, a number of anthropologists have pointed out that by caring for older family members, wives and mothers save the state from spending on welfare programmes (Lock 1996; Long 1996: 171 and discussed in detail in Chapter 6). The *ryōsai kenbo* and middle-class ideology were created and enforced by the government in order to contribute to the Japanese economic and political system. Similar to how Althusser's (1971) discussion, in Japan the state has tried to use education, family, law and politics to control women, and wives and mothers especially, through an ideology that made them essential to the reproduction of social structures and expectations. Japanese women's domestic roles have been constructed and enforced as the hegemonic gender ideals by the state. However, as I have highlighted throughout this chapter, and will detail in Chapters 3 to 6, several women intended to assert their agency within expected gender roles or liberally express their individuality. Thus the consumption patterns of ballet seem to reflect the shifting position of women in Japanese society. However, although ballet is consumed by women in their own way, I propose that now ballet is performed by using the same terms and techniques almost everywhere and is part of a global culture. The questions that remain are: in what differing ways is ballet consumed in Japan and how does its consumption depend on social context? To answer this question we need to explore whether ballet is a globalised or localised product.

Contextualising ballet in Japan

Many scholars have pointed out that in the modern era Japan has mainly imported global culture from the West, and these borrowings have been interwoven with local practices (Condry 2001; Goldstein-Gidoni 2001; Kelly 1998; Miller 2006; Moeran and Skov 1993;

Spielvogel 2003; Tobin 1992b; Watson 1997). Through a process of localisation, most cultural products have been partly changed in order to adjust to the social context of Japan. For example Condry (2001) argues that, in the case of American hip-hop in Japan, the lyrics are not only Japanese as opposed to English, less a few borrowed catch words, but are also adapted to fit Japanese culture. For instance, while hip-hop in America often mentions weapons and crime, in Japan these are rarely referred to and the message is much more “innocuous” (ibid.: 383).

This localisation process occurs not only in Japan but also in many other countries, and has been termed ‘appropriation’, ‘creolization’, ‘glocalization’ or ‘indigenization’ respectively (Appadurai 1986, 1990; Hannerz 1987; Miller 1995; Robertson 1992; Sahlins 1999). These theorists explain that external cultural influence does not imply a simple acceptance of global culture but consists of transformations, an (inter)weaving that depends on local agency. For example, Miller (1995) argues that in the process of appropriation of global commodities local autonomy is asserted, rather than the process being a direct import of mass products.

This might explain why there are various ballet styles to suit local tastes, while the basic skills, terms and techniques remain the same globally. For example, the Russian style (Vaganova) focuses on precise movements and the flexibility of dancers’ bodies. However, the French style (École Française) pays more attention to elegance and precision, and the Italian style (Cecchetti) is more careful about techniques. Moreover, some ballet stories incorporate local preferences. For example, Russian companies tend to change the tragic outcomes of classical stories, such as *Swan Lake*, into happy endings and also to include

more extravagant or dynamic movements, such as jumps or pirouettes, than other national styles.

In Japan, the ballet terms used are French and remain unchanged from those found throughout the rest of the globe although teachers sometimes use Japanese as an additional explanation for foreign concepts and some ballet steps (see Chapter 4). However, the difference in Japan is that the *style* of ballet has not changed from the Vaganova style introduced by the early Russian teachers. This seems to be related to the fact that the Japanese have tended to treat ballet and other western arts as privileged, and these views have, to some degree, persisted to the present day. In fact, many ballet experts in Japan often describe the country as *ballei koshinkoku* (a developing country for ballet), and talk about trying to catch up with the West.

However, although the Japanese have imported ballet as a global product, and have maintained the Russian style, the way in which ballet is consumed seems very Japanese. For example, despite the popularity of learning ballet in Japan, especially among women regardless of age, unlike in the West there are no national ballet schools. Indeed, it is interesting to note how Japanese people have developed their own ballet system. Unlike most European countries, in Japan there are no entrance exams or grades for learning ballet, nor are there any qualifications. Furthermore, there is no licensing system for ballet teachers or ballet schools and companies, and therefore there are no official records of the number of ballet studios or of the percentage of the population learning ballet according to

the Japanese Ballet Association.³⁵ This lack of emphasis on grades, qualifications or licences stands in stark contrast with how Japanese traditional arts are taught and their records assiduously maintained. Most such arts have strictly defined grades and require teachers to hold qualifications. Intriguingly, studying the piano or violin follows the ballet pattern, with no grades or exams, while in some other western arts such as electric piano students can take examinations and move up through a grade system.

Therefore the ballet system in Japan has developed along a different trajectory from both western ballet and traditional Japanese arts. Japanese people see ballet as a western cultural product, which does not belong to any Japanese tradition. Ballet in Japan is thus situated far from its history, tradition, and cultural background, and it has been able to develop in a specific regional way through a process of localisation. However, ballet is a respected western cultural product, thus the adaption has not occurred dramatically. For example, the Russian ballet style largely remains as a privileged globalised product, and only the ballet system such as a grade system or ballet bodies (which I discuss below) have been modified in order to adapt to Japanese culture. Indeed in Japan anyone, regardless of their body proportions, can start dancing ballet and have a chance at becoming a professional ballet dancer. Globally the ideal body type for ballet is considered to be slim and long limbed (cf. Fraleigh 1996; Stokes 1983), as discussed in the Introduction. In most western countries only those dancers who have this particular type of body are allowed to enter ballet schools in order to become professional ballerinas (discussed in Chapter 5). Indeed, many Japanese dancers who perform in the western world have mentioned the difficulties of dancing ballet

³⁵ This is in stark contrast to statistics on Japanese ballroom dancing or aerobics. The *Leisure White Paper*, published in 1999, records the number of people who do aerobics, jazz dance, ballroom dancing and western-style dancing. Ballet appears to be categorised under ballroom dancing and western-style dancing; even hip hop and hula dancing are included in the statistics.

while not having ideal body proportions such as being long limbed. For example Miyako Yoshida (2005), a former principal dancer in the Royal Opera Ballet in Covent Garden, mentions in her book that when she started learning ballet in the Royal Ballet School in London as a teenager, she hated to see herself in the mirror because of her proportions. She said that at the time she was the only student from East Asia in the class and felt that she did not have the requisite ballet proportions, in contrast with the western students who had ideal ballet bodies.³⁶ This means that, while studying ballet remains as a privileged and globalised activity, it has developed in a more egalitarian way in Japan. In sum, in Japan anyone can consume ballet to fulfil their own desires and this is a part of the reason why dancing ballet is becoming more popular among women. In the following ethnographic chapters, I will address in detail how this imported dance form is consumed in a Japanese way by women who enrol their children in ballet schools in order to represent their social aspirations.

³⁶ This insecurity about body type can also be observed with male dancers such as Hattori Yukichi at the Alberta Dance Company in Canada and Kobayashi Juichi former dancer at Béjart Ballet Lausanne in Switzerland. Both men have pointed out how they experienced a certain feeling of ambiguity (sometimes even inferiority) about their bodies in comparison with dancers who possessed ideal male ballet proportions such as being tall and muscular (cf. Burt 1995; see also the interview with Hattori about ideal male body types in ballet, <https://www.j-wave.co.jp/original/worldaircurrent/lounge/back/050409/index.html>, accessed January 2015).

Chapter 3

Cultural Capital and Distinction: Mothers who take their children to ballet class

In the West ballet is seen as a marker of social status (cf. Hamera 2007; Novack 1993), yet historically ballet dancers did not always belong to the upper or even middle-class. Although ballet flourished first in Italy in the seventeenth century and soon after in France, during the nineteenth century the social position of ballerinas deteriorated significantly. Their financial situation required them to prostitute themselves for male patrons. Indeed, middle and upper-class men often went to see ballet in order to find a working-class ballet girl.¹ However, although ballet had almost disappeared in France by the late nineteenth century it flourished in Russia, and ballerinas maintained their middle-class position there. During the twentieth century, the Russian Ballet Dance Russes was formed and the troop was invited to perform in Paris.² This led to a ballet revival in France, and since then it has enjoyed high social status in the West.

Watching ballet in the West is also regarded as an opportunity for the upper middle-class to display or affirm their status. According to Bourdieu (1984), classical music concerts, the opera or the theatre represent the tastes of the dominant class. Moreover, enrolling children in ballet classes is also regarded as a middle-class activity, because learning ballet requires a considerable investment of both time and money, particularly as parents usually enrol

¹ This practice was portrayed in Edgar Degas' famous ballet paintings (Garafola 1997; Hanna 1988: 124-5).

² Russian Ballet Russes was a ballet company founded by Sergei Diaghilev in 1909 and many legendary dancers including Anna Pavlova and Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950) were members of it (cf. Burt 1995).

their children at a young age. This chapter focuses on the fact that just as Euro-American parents believe that ballet lessons can provide their children with a certain social status, so do Japanese parents. Mothers who take their children to ballet classes discussed in this chapter are considered to be middle-class education mothers or *kyōiku mama*. They have sufficient economic capital and free time to enrol their children in such an activity.

I argue that middle-class *kyōiku mama* tried to perform the role of socialiser and educator in order to reproduce the middle-class by enrolling their daughters in ballet lessons. Indeed, middle-class mothers are expected by the state to produce good citizens (Allison 1991: 202-203). However, these mothers did not raise their daughters merely to reproduce a particular socio-cultural self as ‘good wives, wise mothers’ following the aforementioned middle-class ideology. I suggest that they also vicariously assert their own agency (their own hopes, desires, and aspirations) through their children’s activities. Therefore, this chapter explores how mothers play “serious games” (Ortner 2006) by enrolling their daughters in ballet lessons in order to represent and augment their social status and agency.

This largely ethnographic chapter is based on interviews with mothers and it is divided into two sections. Followed by a brief discussion regarding the class system in Japan, the first section describes the methodology I utilised and then examines the social status and different tastes or lifestyles of mothers in relation to their involvement with their daughters’ ballet lessons. The second section focuses on the development of the physical attributes of their children. This is because in many cases the mothers’ ultimate concern for their children was that they achieve an elegant ‘ballet body’ as a sign of their middle-class status and successful life.

The class system in Japan: Neoliberalism, distinction and taste differences within the shared fields of the middle-class

As explained in Chapter 1, despite the existence of class differences, the majority of Japanese claim to be middle-class (cf. Clammer 1997; Ishida and Slater 2010; Sugimoto 2010). This is because many people tend to consume in a manner that obscures obvious class differences. Thus a more Weberian definition of status, one that references honour and ascribed standing, is useful when considering the class system in Japan (Weber (1991[1946])). Indeed, even the working-classes can attain middle-class status through certain lifestyle choices or by displaying certain tastes. In order to distinguish themselves from working-class people, those in the middle-classes try to express their higher status (or social capital) through their consumption of cultural capital.

Because of the rise of neo-liberalism, increasing globalisation and the recessionary economy, by the early 1990s the Japanese socio-cultural systems and traditional social divisions became uncertain, even insecure. As is well documented, large companies gravitated away from offering lifetime employment, and increased the number of irregular labourers creating a class of “precariat” workers (cf. Genda 2006; Ishida and Slater 2010; Miura and Ueno 2010). As a result, the middle-classes began to fear downward mobility, the possibility of falling down to the level of working class. This marks a new emergence of a shared class consciousness in Japan. For example, if compared to individuals considered by Japanese scholars to be working-class, several scholars argue that after the collapse of the bubble economy middle-class parents began to pay more attention to their children’s education and *okeikogoto* for the status of the children and / or themselves (Honda 2008; Kanbara and Takata 2000; Shirahase 2005). Borovoy and Honda argue that in the post-

bubble era bonds between schools and jobs have become weaker, and only few elite universities maintain the required connections to assure a privileged job (2010: 176; 2008: 13). As a result, many middle-class *kyōiku mama* try to take their children to *juku* (cram school) in order to help them get into good schools and hopefully get good jobs in the future (cf. Honda 2008; Kariya 2012). The involvement of *juku* is related to the parents' social class because it requires economic capital and the enthusiasm of parents for children to attend (cf. Hendry 2003: 89; Honda 2008: 13, 65). For example, the biggest educational company in Japan, the Benesse Corporation (<http://benesse.jp>) notes that in 2010 *juku* cost at least 20,000 yen (£80) per month for primary school students.

Bourdieu (1984) has argued that by being actively involved in their children's education parents expect to provide similar educational opportunities and level of education for their children in order to reproduce their class status. Similar to Bourdieu's argument, several Japanese scholars point out that Japanese middle-class parents are more interested in their children's education in order to maintain their social status (*shakaiteki kaiso*) if compared with working-class parents (Honda 2008; Kanbara and Takata 2000 164-5; Kariya 2010). Indeed, according to Kariya, while more than 50% of upper and middle-class students of secondary schools go to *juku*, only 38% of working-class do (2012: 41). These indexes of education and job status are also important to find marriage partners in the post-bubble era because more middle-class people get married to others sharing the same class, educational background and job status in order to reproduce their social position (cf. Shirahase 2005).

Several scholars such as Honda (2008) or Kariya (2010) argue that competency, individualism, or special skills have become more important than before to assure a

successful life in Japanese society in terms of education, jobs, or marriage. Indeed, parents try hard to make their children ‘better’ than others (Honda 2008: 13). However, Kariya, for example, notes that this competency such as *iyoku* (strong will) or *kyōmi* or *kanshin* (interests) is deeply imbedded with an individual’s class background because middle-class students have more opportunities and resources (capital) to develop these abilities compared to working-class people. The gaps between classes have clearly become wider in the post-bubble era, and according to him, it is getting more difficult for working-class individuals to be social mobile (2001: 181-184; 2010: 110-111).

Therefore, middle-class parents who can afford to take their children to educational activities or *okeikogoto* with the expectation that competencies will reproduce middle-class status leading to what they would define as a successful life in the post-bubble era (cf. Borovoy 2010; Honda 2008; Kanbara and Takata 2000: 178-179; Kariya 2010). For example, Honda argues that middle-class parents believe that educational and cultural activities not only provide knowledge or techniques, but also inculcate high motivation, self-interest and social skills in their children (2008: 13). However, it is complicated enough, in Japanese context middle-class try to ‘distinguish’ not only from working-class but also within the shared fields based on different tastes, what Bourdieu would define (1984). For instance, middle-class mothers often divide into small groups depending on what kind of educational activities or *okeikogoto* they take their children to (Honda 2008; Sugiyama 1996). As explained in Chapter 1, Bourdieu noted how a given individual’s tastes or lifestyle choices are highly determined by social class, and that class/status groups thus make distinctions according to their consumption of not only of economic capital, in the classic Marxian formation, but of cultural capital as well. Different tastes are thus rejected,

and can be so strongly embodied as to engender “disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance (‘sick-making’) of the tastes of others” (ibid.: 56). For Bourdieu, gaining capital was clearly enacted to cross-cut class distinctions. However, as I suggest above, in Japan distinction works in more subtle ways. For one, the focus of analysis is mainly within the gradations within the middle-classes as opposed to deeply and clearly divisive class lines.

According to Sugiyama, it is important for young Japanese middle-class mothers to be friends with people who have similar backgrounds such as shared hobbies, roughly equivalent husbands’ salaries, and similar childrearing practices. She explains that taking their children to *okeikogoto* is one of the ways to find similar types of friends (1996: 97-8). Indeed, costly magazines, often priced upwards of 1000 yen (£4) with titles such as *President Family*, *Nikkei Kids Plus*, or *Aera With Kids* etc, are sold targeting wealthy, highly educated parents, and explaining what kind of education and *okeikogoto* they should choose for their children. For example, in 2013-14, the magazine *President Family* discussed how to enter privileged public elementary schools through *ojuken* process (entrance examinations). It also instructed parents as to how their children might enter prestigious schools abroad or even elite Japanese universities such as Tokyo University. The magazine also mentioned *okeikogoto* such as ballet, figure skating, golf or tennis etc in order to “make your children an international star” (*sekai teki stā ni nareru*) (January 2014). On the other hand, several magazines with titles such as *Tamago Club* and *Hiyoko Club* appeal to a broader range of middle-class parents, and explain more about practical issues such as how to deal with children’s sickness, allergy, diets or even how to raise boys and girls differently. In general, even within the ‘shared stratum’ of middle-class parents there are different views about how one should bring up their children. Indeed, during fieldwork

my mothers' informants distinguished between each other rooted in their daughters' schools (for example state or private nursery schools), and how many *okeikogoto* their daughters learned (for example did they only study ballet or did they do multiple activities), which I will analyse in details in the ethnographical section below.

Observing the Observers: Interactions with Ballet Mothers at T.K. Ballet Studio and Fairy Ballet Studio

During my fieldwork, I observed children's ballet classes with their mothers at both the T.K. Ballet Studio and the Fairy Ballet Studios from November 2006 to April 2007. As briefly introduced in Chapter 1, both venues were familiar to me; I had been a student at the T.K. studio, and the owner of Fairy Studio had been a fellow student.

T.K Ballet Studio

The T.K. studio was founded in the late 1960s by the owner and main teacher, Tazuko Kakinuma *sensei* (teacher); hence the T.K. in the name.³ She had been a soloist in the Matsuyama Ballet Company, one of the oldest ballet companies in Japan, and was also one of the founders of the Tokyo City Ballet Company. The school is located in Kamioka in Yokohama city, which is half an hour from Tokyo by train. Kamioka's green spaces make it an attractive place to live for young couples with children. As it is not in Tokyo but in the adjoining prefecture of Kanagawa, Kamioka is cheaper to live in than the *kōkyū jyūtakugai* (expensive residential areas) of the metropolis. The residents here tend to identify themselves as having a lower-middle-class background than those who might live in Tokyo itself.

³ For a more detail regarding T.K. Ballet Studio, see <http://www.cmacs.jp/32353/t.k.ballet>, accessed January 2015.

T.K studio offered a variety of courses. There were classes for younger children, even as young as four-years-old, as well as *jidō* F (students aged five to seven), E (first and second year elementary school children), D (students in the third and fourth grade), C (students in the fifth and sixth grade), B (first and second year children in junior high), A (students in the second or third grade), *chūtō* (junior or high school children), and *kōtō* (high school children) classes. There were two boys' classes for beginners and intermediate students, and also several classes for adults such as ballet stretch classes, or *ippan* C (adult beginners), *ippan* B (adult intermediate) and *ippan* A (adult advanced).

To begin dancing in this studio, students first needed to pay the *nyūkaikin* (entrance fee) of 15,000 yen (approximately £70). After becoming a member, students were expected to pay monthly fees of 8,000 yen, 11,000 yen or 13,500 yen, depending on the level of their class. There was also a pay-as-you-go system, which only adult students sometimes chose to use. All students, apart from adults, were obliged to take part in the stage performance which was held once every eighteen months. This event is elaborated upon later in this chapter. I observed the students of *jidō* F class with their mothers twice a week for six months and I took part in the ballet stretch class every week for four months. In the *jidō* F class there were twelve students aged five to seven, and the majority of their mothers were in their late 30s. These mothers usually engaged primarily in chatting during the ballet lessons. All of mothers at T.K. Studio remained at the studio and watched their daughters' lessons unlike those at Fairy ballet studio (discussed below) where mothers often did not stay.

As briefly mentioned in Introduction, as a former student in order to gain access to the children's session at T.K. Ballet Studio I simply telephoned the owner. She taught most

classes at the studio. But since the owner did not teach children she hired two other teachers who, as it turns out, has been my contemporaries when I was a student there. Although one of them had been my senior and I had had little interaction with her, she immediately recognised me when I telephoned her and gave me permission to observe her class. Her kindness in allowing me to conduct research was partly related to the fact that I used to be in a class with her younger sister, and also our mothers had been friendly even after I left the school. In sum, in gaining access I realised that I was part of an informal social network or “webwork” that was formed in my youth, and though I argue connections exist today as well, these are connections of a different sort (Ingold 2011). She asked me to come to the studio ten minutes prior to starting the class because she wanted to introduce me to her students and their mothers. At the end of our telephone conversation she said “Please do not be surprised to see mothers with their daughters there. They are very different from the mothers who used to bring their children in the past. Now they are very chatty during the lesson! Also, although some of their daughters are really quiet like dolls, others act as if they are monkeys.” Later on in my fieldwork I realised that what she had implied was that now the lifestyle or taste distinction aspirations of the mothers had changed when compared with previous years.

In the beginning I had a good relationship with the mothers. Since a teacher had introduced me saying that I used to be a student at T.K. and that now I was studying in the UK, they became interested in me as a former student as well as current, perhaps somewhat exotic, newcomer. Gradually their interest diminished as they realised that I did not share their concerns and worries, due to my unmarried status. This is because during the ballet sessions mothers not only observed their daughters but also exchanged information. This included

topics such as what they should prepare for the coming seasonal events, such as *shichigosan* (a festival for children aged three, five and seven), how they could prevent their children from contracting influenza, and similar such pragmatic and mundane childrearing conversations. Such topics were of intense interest for young mothers especially, as I noted above, young mothers who had made similar lifestyle choices and shared many opinions on matters of distinction, status or taste. Since I could not provide them with such information, interacting with me did not benefit them and I was gradually excluded from their conversations.

In December 2006 I started to officially interview the mothers in order to learn more about their personal lives and motivations. The interview process provided me with a good opportunity to get to know them better as individuals. I interviewed the leader of the mothers' group first, and since she did not seem bothered by this process, consequently I was availed interviews with other mothers. Due to this, interviews went smoothly as the kind of questions I was interested in became common knowledge. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one, semi-structured basis; they all took place at the studio during the lessons, as they preferred to talk there due to their lack of time during the rest of the day. Interviews usually lasted from 10 to 30 minutes depending on the person (that is to say if informants proved to be talkative and friendly or more reluctant and guarded) or the situation surrounding the interview such as younger children crying or the lesson finishing during the interview. I conducted in-depth interviews with a few of the middle-class mothers for an entire lesson, an hour or longer. In general these individuals were selected because they were keener to talk about their lives or families than other mothers.

Before the interviews I prepared ten different questions which covered topics such as why they took their daughters to ballet class, their expectations for their daughters, their wish for their daughters to become ballerinas, what kind of *okeikogoto* their daughters were doing other from ballet and so on. Before each interview I asked permission to record the conversation to transcribe later. During some of the early interviews a few mothers looked nervous. They told me that they were not sure if they could answer my questions because they did not know very much about ballet. However, since my questions were more related to their wishes or personal backgrounds than to ballet, they soon became more relaxed. On the other hand, some mothers seemed confident answering any questions and looked happy to be interviewed from the beginning. These different attitudes toward interviews among mothers were related to what kind of taste mothers had in terms of their appearance or daughters' schools and so on, all points which are be explored further in this chapter.

The Fairy Ballet Studio

The Fairy studio was set up in 2002 by the owner and main teacher, Miki Futamura *sensei*.⁴ She originally had started dancing at the T.K. Ballet Studio, but since she was a talented dancer she transferred to the more prestigious Tani Momoko Ballet School when she became a high school student. After she graduated from high school she joined the Tokyo City Ballet Company and performed there as a professional soloist until she got married and had a daughter. Although she had not intended to return to the ballet world, her daughter's friend's mother found out that Miki *sensei* used to be a ballerina. She subsequently asked her to establish the school and teach there. According to Miki *sensei*, this was her main reason for starting the studio. The Fairy Ballet Studio is located in Futako-tamagawa in outer Tokyo, and just like Kamioka it attracts many young families.

⁴ For a more detail regarding Fairy Ballet Studio, see <http://fairyballet.net/index.php>, accessed January 2015.

However, being in Tokyo, this area is more expensive than Yokohama, and therefore the mothers at the Fairy Ballet Studio revealed themselves to have more upper middle-class backgrounds than those at the T.K. studio. For example, in Futako-tamagawa the average cost of parking is about 30,000yen (£125) per month in contrast to around 10,000 yen (£42) in Kamioka.

At the Fairy ballet studio there are several courses offered for small children, high school students, as well as two adult beginner classes. There were nearly 100 students attending children's classes, but there were less than 10 students in the adult classes. All of the adult students were mothers of the children dancing in the studio. Miki *sensei* told me that the studio is a long way from any commercial area, thus it did not attract office ladies who usually make up one third of adult classes. The *nyūkaikin*, which was much cheaper than most studios, cost only 5,000 yen (£20) with the monthly fees of 5,000 yen to 10,000 yen, depending on how often one attended the lessons. There was another female teacher in her 30s there along with Miki *sensei*, and both women were tall and beautiful with elegant figures (for example, Miki *sensei* was 165cm tall and slim with long limbs). Indeed their combined beauty and the price of the lessons were the reasons why this studio attracted so many children. During the interviews, many mothers told me how they *akogareru* these teachers and wanted their daughters to be like them.

In order to gain access to the Fairy ballet Studio, I telephoned Miki *sensei*. Although she had been my senior and I had not met her for a long time, she immediately recognised me when I telephoned her because of my mother again. My mother often went to see her performances when she was dancing as a professional ballerina. She recommended that I

observe the Tuesday and Wednesday classes because the youngest girls join these classes and she thought I would have a better chance to see observing mothers than at other classes.

I found it difficult to enter freely into conversation with the mothers in this studio because, in contrast to the T.K. Studio, here the mothers seldom interacted with each other. Moreover, they seemed hesitant to talk to any unknown person. Another difference was that at the Fairy Ballet Studio mothers did not observe their children together as a big group, as was done in T.K. Ballet Studio. This was partly because there was more space here than in T.K. Ballet Studio, and mothers often separated and spread out to observe their children alone or in small groups of two or three women. In short, they were not pressed into communication with one another. It took me more time to get to know all of them, because I needed to access many different small groups as opposed to working my way into a single, larger collective. Furthermore, some mothers just took their children to and from the studio and did not remain to observe them regularly unlike those at T.K. Ballet Studio. As a result it was difficult for me to build any rapport with them. In order to address this difficulty in March of 2007 I began to hand out my name card to the mothers, and I started interviewing them at the studio. I asked some mothers who usually did not observe their daughters during the lessons to remain the studio to talk to me; most of them were friendly when I talked to them one-to-one. I succeeded in conducting semi-structured interviews with all twelve mothers who accompanied their children to this studio, but because we lacked a close relationship, such as the kind that can be developed through weekly meetings, it was difficult for me to do in-depth interviews with them. In sum, they were less outwardly sociable with me or each other and seemingly more individualistic in their reasons for coming to the studio than the mothers at T.K. Ballet Studio. This seemed to relate to the fact

that they were living in more urban areas. I shared the same middle-class status and urban background with these mothers, but again, probably due to my unmarried and student status, they did not consider me to be one of them and were even more cautious about telling me about themselves and their children. Unlike the other studio where informants were more forthcoming, most of them wanted me to use only their initials instead of their real name when I incorporated the interviews into this thesis. This concern had never been raised in any of my interviews at the T.K Ballet Studio. Nevertheless I was still able to conduct meaningful interviews, and in April 2007, once I had gathered sufficient data on mothers from different studios, I stopped observing the mothers at Fairy Ballet Studio.

In the next ethnographic section, I mainly refer to the T.K. Ballet Studio since my period of observation at that studio was longer than at the other. However I also focus on mothers from the Fairy Ballet Studio later in the chapter in terms of their comparative expectations as to what ballet could improve in regard to their daughters' physical attributes. All the mothers at T.K Ballet Studio were professional housewives, so these mothers focused most of their energy and attention on domestic affairs and raising their children. Moreover, as expanded upon below, during interviews they said that they had no intention of returning to their jobs at least not until their children began school. As noted in Chapter 2, middle-class women have no urgent need to work unlike working-class mothers for whom employment is often an important factor in family finances. Thus, I submit that, given these conditions all of these mothers were middle-class. Therefore, in this chapter I will investigate through my ethnography what kind of motivations these middle-class mothers had in taking their daughters to ballet as an *okeikogoto*. Is this drive somehow related to middle-class status in terms of consciousness or expectations?

Ethnography Part 1: Exploring Social status, different tastes and the lifestyle of mothers

During their daughters' ballet lessons, as noted above, all of the mothers at the T.K Ballet Studio stayed at the studio, and I observed their daughters' ballet lessons with them. Mothers rarely watched the children, rather, they keenly talked about their children with each other at the studio, and I listened to their conversations. For example during my fieldwork in 2006, there were several (attempted) murders of schoolchildren. The suspects targeted elementary school girls and the police had asked parents to take their daughters to and from the school. The mothers in the ballet studio were talking about the incidents and were naturally worried about the safety of their daughters. Also, as mentioned above, the topics of their discussions included nursery schools, local hospitals, coming seasonal events and other day-to-day affairs.

In sum, mothers saw daughters' activities as the opportunity to socialise, exchange practical information, and in the process, make friends with other mothers. For example, one mother, Nishi-san, said to me during an interview:

When Kazuha [her daughter] had a problem with going to bed, I asked other mothers in the class what time their children retired. Since my husband returned from his company very late, I felt bored waiting alone for him and kept Kazuha awake till late. As a result, she became a *yoippari* (a night owl) and used to fall asleep during the ballet lessons. After talking to several mothers, I ensured that Kazuha was in bed at 7:30 and after that she did not sleep during lessons any more.

I enquired if she ever discussed these issues with her neighbours. Nishi-san replied:

I live in an apartment and do not have a particular *kinjozukiai* (affinity with neighbours). My husband returns home very late, my parents live far away in Yamanashi prefecture and only my sister sometimes visits me to help. At *yōchien* I have other mothers who are friends and who could look after Kazuha if need be, but I never asked them to do so.

Nishi-san did not sound particularly involved in any social community, and therefore, the ballet studio was one of the few places for her to ask other mothers about childrearing. Several scholars such as Imamura (1987), Iwao (1993), and Ochiai (1997) argue that professional housewives in urban areas are isolated. According to these scholars, before the 1960's Japan was a more 'kin network' society than it is now, and it was easier for young mothers to rely on their families or relatives who had knowledge about child-rearing. However, after the 1960s they argue that development of the economy has led to an increase in the number of nuclear families,⁵ particularly in large cities where it becomes difficult for young mothers to talk to their relatives (Ochiai 1997: 68-72). Consequently, many mothers try to find friends from their child's nursery school or from community centres in order to exchange information about childrearing (Iwao 1993: 132; Lebra 1984: 209). I contend that *okeikogoto* is another place wherein mothers are enabled to seek help and assistance in obtaining knowledge for childrearing. Iwao states that "non-working mothers cultivate friendships with other mothers to exchange information, join a circle that enable them to give their children wider contacts and experience" (1993: 132). Indeed, during their daughters' lesson, ballet was not the main topic of the mothers' conversation. However, as noted above, mothers who sought to exchange information with each other

⁵ The average number of children per family was 4.54 in 1947 but had decreased to 1.37 by 2009 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2010b).

divided into smaller groups based on different tastes, what Bourdieu would define as stratifications and groups bound by “distinctions” (1984). This is despite the fact that all mothers belonged to Japan’s middle-class.

Although these groups were neither particularly rigid nor overt, I still noticed at least two major cliques amongst mothers. One consisted of five mothers, whose daughters had attended the same local nursery school. I call them Group B. Another was made up of four mothers, whose daughters had attended privileged nursery schools. I call them Group A. Indeed, both groups had different attitudes towards me during fieldwork. While mothers in Group A were interested in me and asked questions about my life in England, my dance experience, my research and other matters, the others did not seem interested in these issues and always maintained a certain distance from me.

In particular, three mothers in Group A were congenial friends and always sat together, and they did not talk to other mothers unless it was necessary. The three of them respected one other mother (in Group A): Hayashida-san. She and a mother in Group B called Shida-san were considered by mothers to have the most seniority in this children’s *jidō* F class. This was because of the length of time their girls were enrolled in the studio. Their elder daughters had studied ballet here as well, so they joined this ballet studio earlier than the others. According to Nakane (1973), in Japanese society hierarchy is often decided by the age, the year of entering a certain group, and educational background (discussed details in Chapter 4). In this ballet class, the hierarchy of mothers was partly decided by the length of time mothers had enrolled their daughters in the studio. In particular, Shida-san exercised a degree of control over other mothers’ activities, for example by collecting money to buy

gifts for the teachers or organising parties for the mothers. In the execution of these activities she came across as very authoritative, often instructing other women on how their children should behave in front of the teacher or how they should use the studio, for example. However, mothers were not only ranked by length of time involved in the ballet company but also were distinguished by their tastes. Whenever Hayashida-san came to the studio, the three mothers (in Group A) made an effort to greet and talk to her. However, Shida-san (who belonged to Group B) did not seem to be particularly well respected by the mothers in Group A, and this situation was related to her different tastes or lifestyle, as detailed following section.

I interviewed all the mothers and their dancing daughters as well during ballet lessons at the studio. In order to know their position within the middle-class I did not ask mothers directly about their educational backgrounds or their husband's income. Because of my status as a native anthropologist, I knew that in Japan such inquiries are considered as inappropriate (see Chapter 1). However, instead, I observed and interviewed them with an eye towards knowing what kind of tastes or lifestyles these middle-class mothers had, and how these were related to distinctions within the Japanese socio-cultural milieu.

Shared tastes among mothers in Group A

Weber (1991[1946]) argues that individuals within the middle-classes compete with each other for status as compared to the more rigidly bound working or upper-classes. This, he states, is because middle class status is more ambiguous and insecure. In this ballet studio, (in contrast,) two groups of mothers were not directly competitive with each other, but, as noted above, they distinguished between each other based on criteria that were rooted in

their appearance (hair colour (brown/black), clothes (casual/formal), jobs (aspires to work as a part-timer/full-timer), their daughters' schools (state/private nursery school), and how many *okeikogoto* their daughters learned (only ballet/multiple).

For example, all of the mothers in Group A stated that they either took their daughters to several *okeikogoto*, along with ballet, or they planned to enrol them in more lessons in the near future. Oga-san, who was in her early 30s with a five-year-old daughter, Kaho-chan, had long black hair and often wore semi-formal clothes such as casual suits. Her way of talking was articulate and many mothers believed her to be intelligent. Oga-san lived in the same apartment building as Iino-san which was just two minutes from the studio. Oga-san said that she had worked up until she gave birth. She continued:

I want to return to work, but I am not sure if I can be hired as a full-timer because I had difficulty getting a job even when I was a *shinsotsu* (a student who has just left education). I think that nobody will be interested in me since I have been out of work for four years. So, I am recently more interested in returning to university to study as a postgraduate student. I studied sociology in my undergraduate course and I want to carry on with it in a master's course. It will not be difficult for me to enter the course. My husband is wondering why I want to study again, but he supports my choice.

Her daughter, Kaho-chan, attended a private *yōchien*,⁶ the *Shonan Shirayuri Joshi Gakuen*, which continues on all the way to the university level. This is an expensive and privileged girl's school, thus most students are from upper or upper-middle class families. It took her

⁶ Tuition fees are not particularly different if one compares a private and state *yōchien*. However, private *yōchien* which continue on all the way to the university are expensive.

more than one hour to get there by train, and for this reason she did not have many friends in her neighbourhood. Oda-san said: “Because there are few forms of physical education in *Shirayuri gakuen*, I thought Kaho needed some exercise and I decided to take her to this ballet studio. Through learning ballet, I want my daughter to feel confident. I hope that she will become an independent woman (*jiritsu shita hito*).” Kaho-*chan* took piano lessons along with ballet, and this was one of the significant differences from mothers in Group B. In all cases their children only learned one *okeikogoto*, ballet. Oga-san had played the piano as well from the age of two until she was eighteen. She said that she also used to study *sadō* (tea ceremony) and *kadō* (flower arranging). When I asked Kaho-*chan* directly why she decided to learn ballet, she said: “I do not know why, but I have just started.” But, when I asked her about doing other *okeikogoto*, she answered me very confidently: “I learn piano too, so I am not interested in any other *okeikogoto*”.

Hayashida-san was 43 years old with three children including the six-year-old Sayaka-*chan*, who was currently studying ballet. As explained above, because her elder daughter in the fifth grade of elementary school also learned ballet there, she had the most seniority in this ballet studio. Hayashida-san had short black hair and often wore semi-formal clothes. She said, “I went to a *tandai* (a two-year-college) and married a *gyūshoku* (a Buddhist priest in the temple). I feel as if I am working 24 hours a day.” Unlike other mothers in Group A, she was involved with the family business. Therefore, before her children went to the local public elementary school, she said that they used to go to the *shūkyō-hōjin no hoikuen* (a religious type of nursery school) in which, according to her, only children whose parents were working could attend.

Hayashida-san said, “My hope was that my daughter would gain special skills through ballet, and then become more confident about herself, so that is why I took Sayaka to this ballet studio”. Like Kaho-san, Sayaka-*chan* was studying the piano as well at the time. Hayashida san said that her eldest son had learned to play the piano and his teacher came to their house every week, so ‘naturally’ Sayaka-*chan* started learning the instrument too. Similar to other mothers in Group A, Hayashida-san herself had studied the piano in her youth, so she thought it was important for Sayaka-*chan* to be able to play a musical instrument. In addition to piano Hayashida-san said that she learned *ocha* (tea ceremony) and *oryōri* (cooking) when she was in *tandai* and attended an *ohana no gakkō* (a flower-arranging school) for a year after she graduated from *tandai*. All of these *okeikogoto* were regarded as *hanayome shugyō* up until the 1980s, which was important training for unmarried upper-middle-class young women to become a good wife (see Chapter 1). Hayashida-san added that she currently studied *shishū* (embroidery), which the mother of one of her friends who was 73 years old, taught.

Iino-san was a 35-year-old housewife and had a five-year-old daughter, Yui-*chan*. Unlike the other mothers in this group, she had dyed brown hair and during winter she often wore a turtleneck jumper and a straight skirt. She had an appearance of a university student, because of her hairstyle and fashion. Iino-san said: “I had left my company after marriage, but wish to rejoin the workforce when Yui begins elementary school. I will not work as *haken* (a temporary worker) or *pāto*, but as *arubaito*⁷ at a company such as Starbucks.” Yui-*chan* attended the same private nursery school as Kaho-*chan*, *Shonan Shirayuri Joshi*

⁷ The word is derived from the German *arbeiter* (worker). *Arubaito* is paid hourly and has no benefits like *pāto*, but working hours and demands are usually less than *pāto*.

Gakuen. Iino-san said, “I wanted to learn ballet when I was a small, but I could not. So, I wanted Yui to learn ballet.” Iino-san also added that ballet was a common *okeikogoto* for girls in *Shirayuri gaguen* to learn. She continued: “In nursery school, almost everyone learns ballet. There are only a few students who do not learn ballet. Everyone definitely learns one *okeikogoto* chosen either from ballet, English conversation and/or piano. Some people learn two or all three of them.”

Yui-*chan* did not learn anything apart from ballet, but Iino-san wanted Yui-*chan* to learn the piano when Yui-*chan* reached her final year of nursery school. She thought that it was important for Yui-*chan* to study the piano or *electone* (electric piano) in order to have a foundation in music. In fact, Iino-san herself used to play the *electone* and also did *eikaiwa* (English conversation), *Kumon* maths,⁸ *shūji* (Japanese calligraphy) and went to *juku* (a cram school) when she was a child. Yui-*chan* seemed interested in doing some more *okeikogoto* because she saw others going. When I asked Yui-*chan* directly why she decided to learn ballet, she said: “Because Kaho-*chan* (the daughter of Oga-san) learns ballet.” Also, when I asked her about another *okeikogoto*, she said: “I want to learn figure-skating and piano because everyone does.”

Nishi-san was in her late 30s and had a five-year-old daughter, Kazuha-*chan*. She had a black bobbed hairstyle and often wore a turtleneck jumper and denim jeans, thereby looking like a young woman. Kazuha-*chan* attended the local private *yōchien*, but Nishi-san was enthusiastic about her daughter’s education. For example, during our interview she told me that she had needed to queue from three in the morning in order to apply for her

⁸ *Kumon* is a cram school, which is well known for its mathematics course. It was set up in 1958 and has now spread to 46 different counties (<http://www.kumon.ne.jp/kigyo/index.html?lid=2>) (Russell 1996: 249).

daughters' *yōchien*, as entry to the school was based on a *senchakujun* (first-come first-served) basis. She worked as a general full-time contractor after graduating from university, but this job only lasted until she got married. Nishi-san said: "I want to start working again as a full-timer when my child becomes older (*kodomo-no-te ga hanaretara*). There are not many things for me to do every day. I am not particularly interested in earning money, but want to use my time more efficiently and to contribute to society." Nishi-san said that Kazuha-*chan* used to attend an English language school before learning ballet. However, since the English language lessons and ballet classes were on the same day, Nishi-san chose ballet. This was because she thought: "*Barei ha imashika dekinai*" (it is better for Kazuha to learn ballet right now). Nishi-san said, "I wanted Kazuha to do some exercised type of *okeikogoto*. Although I did not push her, I hoped she would choose to learn ballet because she can be feminine and also dance anywhere including abroad. So, when she told me that she would like to learn ballet, I was very delighted"

Like other mothers in Group A, Nishi-san considered music as essential for Kazuha-*chan* to learn:

Kazuha should learn to play some musical instrument as well because I believe that it is important to read music. I thought about taking Kazuha to violin or flute lessons, but they are very noisy and I was worried about bothering the neighbours. So, since I used to study piano, I want Kazuha to learn piano when she enters elementary school.

So, although Kazuha-*chan* went to the local private *yōchien* at the time, in terms of *okeikogoto* Nishi-san had similar tastes to the mothers in *Shirayuri-gakuen* who enrolled their daughters in ballet, English conversation and piano classes. In addition to piano,

Nishi-san herself used to play the *electone*, did *shūji* and *soroban* (abacus) in elementary school, *ocha*, *ohana*, *eikaiwa* and *shuwa* (sign language) in junior high school. After marrying, she learned to swim, studied *chōkin* (goldsmithing) and *ishino kanbetsu* (gemmology). She went to a *senmon gakkō* (polytechnic school) to study the last two crafts and she even obtained qualifications for them. She said that she designed and made a ring during her schooldays and it was displayed in a department store. When I asked Kazuha-*chan* directly why she decided to learn ballet, she said: “Because my *hatoko* (second cousin) learned ballet and I wanted to dance like her.” However, when I asked her if she wanted to learn something apart from ballet, Kazuha-*chan* could not answer my question and kept silent. Nishi-san answered me instead, “Kazuha wants to learn figure-skating because she can spin a lot when skating. She thinks that figure-skating will help her to *pirouette* a lot in ballet.”

Mothers in Group B

During my interviews, in contrast to the mothers in Group A, mothers in this group told me that their daughters were currently not learning any *okeikogoto*, apart from ballet, and did not have any particular plan to add activities in the future. All of the mothers in Group B took their daughters to the local nursery school, and were not interested in going through the *ojuken* process. The majority of them (67%) said that they enrolled their daughters in ballet because their daughters’ friends in nursery school were learning ballet.

For example, Oda-san, who was 31 years old and had two daughters, was eight months pregnant at the time we met. Her eldest daughter, Natsuki-*chan* (5-years-old), studied ballet at the studio. Oda-san had long dyed brown-coloured hair and often wore a denim jumper

skirt (which was probably related to her pregnancy). She told me that she used to play the saxophone in an amateur rock band and she still looked like a member of a rock band. She always brought her younger daughter to the studio with her as well. She said, “I left my company after marriage, but I wish to rejoin the workforce as a *pāto* eventually.”

Oda-san said, “Because Mayu-*chan* [a daughter of Nomoto-san] learned ballet, Natsuki asked me to take her to this ballet studio.” Oda-san continued, she said that she did not particularly wish for her daughter to go to a public elementary school or learn other *okeikogoto*. She thought that in terms of her daughter’s *okieikogoto* choices *subete honnin no ishi* (everything depended on her daughter’s will and not hers). So, if her daughter wanted to do other *okeikogoto*, she would enrol her in one. She did not think it necessary that her daughter study ballet. Her daughter did not seem interested in any other *okeikogoto*, either. When I asked her daughter if she wanted to do something apart from ballet, she said, “*Nai*” (no).

Nomo-san was 34 years old and had three children. Her eldest daughter, Mayu-*chan* (5-years-old), learned ballet at the studio. Nomo-san had dyed brown short-hair and wore high street fashions such as skinny jeans, and did not look like she had three children. Since her husband was able to look after her children at home, she often took care of Oda-san’s daughters in the studio. She said, “I left my company after I married. I am not willing to rejoin the workforce until my youngest child goes to elementary school because I am too busy raising children.”

During our interview Nomo-san said, “Since I took Mayu to see ballet in the theatre when

she was two years old, she kept saying she wanted to learn ballet.” Nomo-san also said that her daughter, Mayu-*chan*, did not do any other *okeikogoto* apart from the ballet. Unless Mayu-*chan* claimed that she wanted to, Nomo-san was not thinking of enrolling her in any other *okeikogoto*. The reason for that was slightly different from other mothers in Group B: Nomo-san used to study piano, and did *shūji*, *soroban*, *eikaiwa* and swimming lessons when she was a child like the upper-middle-class mothers mentioned above. However, since she had had little time to practise, she said in regard to herself “*Doremo minitsukana katta*” (I could not do any of them well). Therefore, based on her own experience, Nomo-san wanted Mayu-*chan* to only do what she wanted to do and continue to do and enjoy it. She did not want Mayu-*chan* to have the same experience as she had. When I asked her daughter if she wanted to do something apart from ballet, she said: “*Tokuni nai*” (not particularly).

Other mothers were willing to take their daughters to another *okeikogoto*, but it was difficult for them to do it because of their financial situations. Matsuda-san who was in her 30s had three children, aged ten, five and three. Her only daughter, Nano-*chan* (5-years-old), attended ballet at the studio. Matsuda-san had short black hair and was slightly plump compared to the other mothers. She always brought two of her sons to the studio with her. They often fought with each other during the lessons.

Matsuda-san said, “Since Natsuki-*chan* learns ballet and looks like she is having fun, I decided to take Nano to this ballet studio. Matsuda-san thought that since Nano-*chan* was good at sports, she should partake in other activities. Indeed, when I asked Nano-*chan* if she wanted to do something else apart from ballet, she told me her wish was to learn figure-

skating. However, Matsuda-san stated that Nano-*chan* was currently not doing anything apart from ballet. She explained the reason why to me as follows: “Since I have three children, I am unable let her learn several *okeikogoto*. I want her to dance ballet properly first.”

Matsuda-san was the only mother in the studio who had continued working as a full-timer after marrying and having children. However, after moving to Yokohama from her home town, Miyazaki, two years earlier, she found it difficult to continue both.

I thought that I would keep working, but after I moved here because of my husband’s job, I could not go to work. This is partly because the *hoikuen* is very expensive here in contrast to Miyazaki. So I cannot use it as I used to. Also, since my parents are no longer around, I cannot ask them to look after my children if the children are sick etc. If I try to work again at my age, I could only work as a *pāto* or *arubaito*. If I compare the salary of these jobs with the fees of the *hoikuen*, I feel that I do not need to go to work (*sokomade shinakutemo*). It might be better to be with the children at home when they are in the lower grades of elementary school. But, my youngest son is still 3 years old, so I do not know when I can go back to work.

Shida-san, who was a 39-year-old mother, had two daughters (5 and 11 years old) and both were learning ballet. As explained above, because of her elder daughter, she had the most seniority in this ballet studio. She was slim, had short black hair and often wore knee-length denim skirts; a style regarded as unusual amongst married women for it is regarded as unseemly to show bare knees in public in Japan. Her style and fashion and body proportions helped her to look younger than her actual age. Shida-san also said that she

used to learn *electone* and *shūji* when she was a child. She was the only mother in work at the time. She stated: “I began working again as a *pāto* from last year because my eldest daughter had entered 3rd grade in elementary school.” Her eldest daughter was already eleven, and so it seemed possible for her to return to work. She worked at a hair salon as a receptionist from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., returning home before her daughter arrived home from school.

Shida-san said: “I think that girls who are learning ballet are *kawaii* (cute). So, I asked my neighbours who used to study ballet to introduce me some ballet studios”. Shida-san’s daughter, the five-year-old Nao-*chan*, did not do anything apart from ballet. I asked Shida-san if she wanted her daughter to learn piano, etc in the future. She replied: “*Narawasetai desukedo*” (I want her to do it, but....), implying that she did not have money to do so. In fact, her two daughters and Shida-san herself studied ballet at the T.K ballet studio, as mentioned above. So, it might have been difficult for her to take Nao-*chan* to another *okeikogoto* in terms of time and finances. Also, during our interview, she told me how difficult it was to let her daughters continue attending ballet lessons. According to her, her eldest daughter, Mai-*chan* (11 years old), went to lessons three times a week, on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. In particular, Sunday is a day for practising dancing in toe shoes and Mai-*chan* could not miss the class. As a result, the family could not go out easily at weekends and it seemed problematic especially for her husband. Shida-san stated:

It is *kitsui* (it is tough [to have a lesson on Sunday]). In order to let my daughters continue dancing ballet the family has to cooperate (*kyōryoku*) with each other. It might be the same as any other *okeikogoto*, though...I did not imagine it in the

beginning, but now everyone including my husband and even my mother is involved (*makikonjatteru*) in my daughters' ballet.

Therefore, she was not particularly keen to take her daughter to another *okeikogoto*. Also, her younger daughter, Nao-*chan*, seemed disinterested in taking part in another *okeikogoto*.

On the other hand, a number of mothers appeared hesitant to take their daughters to other *okeikogoto* even though their daughters asked them to. Kawada-san, who was in her 30s and had two children - a two-year-old son and five-year-old daughter Tsubomi-*chan* -- had short black hair and wore sporty clothes such as striped t-shirts and jeans. She was a very friendly woman and easy to talk to. Kawada-san said, "I left my company after marriage, but when my children are older, I will rejoin the workforce as a *pāto*. At least I want to get out of the house (*Sotoni ha detai*).” Kawada-san herself used to learn *soroban* in elementary school, and had joined a tennis club in junior high school and a brass band club in high school. She played the trombone, and after graduation, she had not played either tennis or the trombone.

During our interview, Kawada-san said “because of Natsuki-*chan*, I decided to take my daughter to this ballet studio.” Kawada-san also stated that her daughter, Tsubomi-*chan*, was not doing anything apart from ballet although Tsubomi-*chan* kept asking her to take her to piano lessons. She explained to me: “Since she has just started dancing ballet recently, I told her to wait for a while.” When I asked Tsubomi-*chan* if she wanted to learn something apart from ballet, she said: “I want to learn piano and figure-skating. I want to be

a professional figure-skater such as Shizuka Arakawa-san, Mao-*chan* and Miki-*chan*.”⁹

Katsu-san was a 36-year-old mother of two: a ten-year-old son and six-year-old daughter Hitomi-*chan*. She had dyed brown-coloured mid-length hair and often wore jumpers and denim jeans. Despite her quiet demeanour, she was a very sociable woman. She interacted with many mothers and she was also very good at talking to children. She said: “I left my company after I got married, but am keen on working again as a *pāto*. But, my daughter is still a nursery school student, this will not happen until I get more time”.

Katsu-san said “...because of Mayu-*chan*, my daughter asked me to take her to this ballet studio.” Katsu-san’s daughter, Hitomi-*chan*, was also not learning anything else at the time. She said that she would not take her daughter to any other *okeikogoto* until Hitomi-*chan* expressed a wish to learn something else. If Hitomi-*chan* asked for it, they would discuss whether or not Hitomi-*chan* really wanted to continue. Despite her statement, when Hitomi-*chan* asked Katsu-san to enrol her in piano lessons, Katsu-san said she was not keen to do so. She explained:

In regard to piano lessons, parents have to be involved a lot. My eldest son is learning piano now, but I have to spend a lot of time looking after him particularly with his homework, etcetera. It is not easy for me to do that. So, I am not so keen to take my daughter to piano lessons. [In contrast to piano], for ballet you just need to come to the studio to dance and do your best. Apart from piano and ballet, she has not asked

⁹ Mao-*chan* (Mao Asada) and Miki-*chan* (Miki Ando) joined the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin for figure-skating with Shizuka Arakawa-san. Since Mao-*chan* was the youngest among the three women (she was 16 years old at the time), she seemed most popular among girls in nursery school.

me to take her to anything else, so I chose ballet for her.

When I asked Hitomi-*chan* if she wanted to do something besides ballet, she said: “I want to learn cheerleading because it looks fun!” Katsu-san was next to me listening to our conversation and she seemed very surprised to hear what Hitomi-*chan* said.

Analysis

Appearance

The attention I have paid to the mothers’ fashions and styles may seem trivial but it is, in fact, telling. Tastes clearly differed within the two groups. For example, while most mothers in Group B had dyed their hair brown, all of the mothers in Group A, apart from one, kept it black. During the early 2000s dyed hair became popular among young women, and some mothers appeared to have been influenced by that trend. Several scholars argue that it is more common amongst middle-class to keep their original black hair colour because the ‘traditional’ Japanese woman’s long, straight, black hair and white skin (with light make-up) represents the ideal of femininity and middle-class status (Clammer 1995: 212; McVeigh 2000; Miller 2006; Spielvogel 2003). As Bourdieu (1984) argues, individual tastes are highly determined by social class. On the other hand, heavily permed, curly or dyed hair, tanned skin and heavy make-up are seen as trends common amongst the lower classes or *mizu shōbai* (bar-hostess) (Miller 2006: 27-39). As another feature, Group A’s mothers such as Oga-san or Iino-san wore a more formal style of dress compared to mothers in Group B who wore high street fashions or jeans. This was perhaps due to the fact that Group A were more involved in children’s *ojuken*. *Ojuken*, as mentioned above, are part of the process whereby *kyōiku mama* try to get their children into good nurseries or

elementary schools.¹⁰ On entrance exam day mothers are often asked to come to the interview (*mensetsu*) as well as their children. Mothers therefore feel it necessary to display a more formal appearance in order to make a good impression during the interview. There are books, magazines and websites describing what mothers should wear and how they should behave on the day of the *ojuken*. They are encouraged to have black hair, wear black or dark blue-coloured suits and shoes and carry a colour-coordinated handbag. Every spring, large department stores set up special booths to explain and sell *ojuken* ‘costumes’ and goods to these *kyōiku mama* for themselves and for their children.¹¹ By adopting a certain appearance, I suggest that mothers in Group A were much keener to provide their daughters with a better education, compared to mothers in Group B, in order to reproduce/assure middle-class status (as well as to make their children better than other children). Indeed, in the post-bubble era education became a more important element in order for children to have a successful life in what is perceived to be an increasingly competitive society, as explained at the beginning of this chapter.

Daughters’ schools and the number of children

The mothers in Group A whom I interviewed were very interested in and actively involved in their children’s education. For example, Oga-san and Iino-san took their daughters to private nursery schools which were linked to schools that continue all the way up to the university level. These schools are so-called *esukareitā shiki no gakkō* (escalator schools) or *fuzokukō* (schools affiliated with universities), and the majority of students who attend them are from upper-middle-class or upper-class families (Hendry 2003: 89; Kariya 2001: 107;

¹⁰ As argued above, middle-class mothers often feel isolated in urban areas, and this situation reinforces them to be involved in children’s education as *kyōiku mama*. Therefore, despite the decline in the birth rate, the number of children doing *ojuken* in Tokyo actually increased by 12% from 2000 to 2007 (Nikkei News Paper, 27/4/2007).

¹¹ Nikkei Newspaper, 27/4/2007

Lebra 1984: 197). One reason is the cost of tuition. *Fuzokukō* are supposed to provide a better education and have better facilities. They also guarantee entrance to a good university,¹² so *fuzokukō* tuition fees are often considerably higher than other schools. Most mothers take their children to cram schools to prepare for the *ojuken*, which also requires a considerable amount of money, as explained earlier. Indeed, during interviews Oga-san and Iino-san said that they took their daughters to *juku* in order to enrol them into the privileged schools, *shirayuri-gakuen*. Therefore, it is far more expensive to bring up upper-middle or upper-class children than those further down the social scale. According to the *Monbukai* (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) in 2006,¹³ the average amount parents spent on public-school children up to graduation from high school was approximately five million yen (£20,833) per person. Thus, the three mothers in Group A in the ballet studio claimed that they could not afford to have more than one child although all of mothers in Group B had more than two children.

Apart from Oga-san and Iino-san the other mothers in the ballet studio did not take their daughters to the *fuzokukō*, but the mothers in Group A were much more interested in their daughter's education than the other groups of mothers. Nishi-san, who as noted above waited in a queue for several hours to assure a place in the local nursery school, was particularly enthusiastic about her daughter's education. Nishi-san also planned to enrol her

¹² In *Kokuritsu daigaku no fuzokukō* (schools which are affiliated to national universities), students can remain enrolled until high school level but cannot enter university without passing an entrance examination. Nevertheless, since *Kokuritsu daigaku* maintain a high status as traditional universities, many mothers wish their children to enter *fuzokukō*. On the other hand, in most *Shiritsu daigaku no fuzokukō* (schools which are affiliated to private universities) students can enter university without passing an entrance exam. However, there are usually many *fuzokukō* attached to the same university, so unless students attend the main *fuzokukō*, only those with a good grade point average can enter university. The percentage of students who can attend universities from minor *fuzokukō* varies from 30% to 80%, depending on the *fuzokukō* (Kariya 2012).

¹³ http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/toukei/001/006/07120312/003.htm, accessed December 2008.

daughter in a *fuzokukō* for her elementary school. During one of the lessons, I heard that Nishi-san had been asking Oga-san about the *ojuken*. Nishi-san said that she was interested in *fuzokukō* because the area where she lived did not have good local schools, so either she wanted her daughter to enter a local *fuzokukō* or she wanted to move to Tokyo, which offers better state schools. However, she hesitated to enter her daughter in an *ojuken* because she had observed that at one of the cram schools many of the mothers who hoped their daughters would enter good schools were full of *ei-ei-ō* spirit.¹⁴ She was afraid of this rather obsessive type of woman and school. Since Oga-san had put her daughter through the *ojuken* process, Nishi-san asked Oda-san to give her some advice.

On the other hand, all of the mothers in Group B stated during interviews that they would send their daughters to local state elementary schools, and none of them were even slightly interested in going through the *ojuken* process in order to get their daughters into private elementary schools. As explained above, working-class families cannot afford *ojuken*, and are often hesitant to pay so much money for extra education even if they may be able to.¹⁵ However, my informants in Group B were middle-class mothers who could stay at home as professional housewives and take their daughters to ballet lessons.

During interviews, these mothers stressed that they did not want to force their daughters in terms of education and *okeikogoto*, as they respected their daughters' wishes. Everything depended not on their will but their daughters' will. Several scholars argue that while less

¹⁴ In order to express their *tōkon* (fighting spirit) the samurai used to shout this phrase before going to war. According to Rohlen, in many cram schools this kind of yelling is used as a slogan (1980: 219-220).

¹⁵ Although several scholars such as Hendry (1993a) and Lebra (1984) point out that some working-class people are interested in sending their children to good schools too because they want to provide them with opportunities for social mobility through education.

educated mothers see their children's will as important, highly educated mothers believe that mothers should decide what kind of *juku* or *okeikogoto* their children should be enrolled in order to provide best choice with their children (Honda 2008: 65; Kanbara and Takata 2000: 178-179). Although I did not collect data of mothers' educational background, if we are to follow the research by Honda (2008) and Kanbara and Takata (2000), alongside the points I have made above, it seems likely that mothers in Group B have slightly lower status in terms of cultural capital compared to mothers in Group A within shared middle-class. Mothers in Group B were clearly more relaxed about their daughters' future, and as such placed less pressure on them to 'perform'.

Jobs

During my interviews, many mothers regardless of taste differences told me that they had left their company jobs after they married (*kotobuki taisha*). A mother in Group A, Nishi-san, said that *kotobuki taisha* was usual for women in her company, and all her seniors had done the same thing. She added that since her husband worked at the same company as her, there was a particular reason why she had to leave.¹⁶ As was noted above, all the mothers at the T.K. ballet studio were professional housewives, and they indicated that they did not intend to return to the workforce until their children reached at least the age of ten. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, this is related to the social expectation that middle-class mothers should stay at home until their children have grown up unlike working-class people who intend to return to work when their children were three or five. Indeed amongst all those interviewed a mother in Group B, Shida-san, was the only mother who was working at the time. This was related to the fact that her eldest daughter was already in elementary school.

¹⁶ Until recently it was common for women to leave the company once they married their male colleagues (*shokuba kekkon*). This did not usually apply to men.

Most girls in the studio were five years old, and they were the eldest child for most of the mothers. Therefore, most mothers were constrained by gender norms and middle-class ideology to stay at home until their children were grown up.

As with Shida-san, many mothers in Group B stated that they would secure part-time jobs when they eventually returned to the workforce. For example, Kawada-san said she wanted to work as soon as her children began at school. She stressed that she did not mind being a part-timer, as long as she could get out of the house. As mentioned in Chapter 2, middle-class mothers rarely feel the financial need to work, thus mothers who work as *pāto* are regarded as working-class. However, recent research notes that in the post-bubble era some middle-class mothers have started being involved in *pāto* jobs after their children are grown up in order to become more than just housewives (cf. Honda 2008: 121-140; Rosenberger 2013: 144). Indeed, the motivations for getting part-time jobs among mothers in Group B were related to earning their own money or filling their time. These are motivations clearly different from the accepted working-class's motivation of overcoming a lack of financial support from their husbands.

On the other hand, mothers in Group A were not interested in securing part-time jobs. Although some mothers might be unwilling to get jobs because working is symbolic of a drop in social status (a point that is further elaborated on in Chapter 6), many in this group said to me during our interviews that they wished to rejoin the workforce eventually as full-timers because of the priority they placed on self-fulfilment. However, it would be difficult for them to do so after a long absence from the job market, as mentioned in Chapter 2. The case of Oga-san aptly illustrated this dilemma; she wanted to return to work as a full-timer,

but she noticed it would be difficult. So, she intended to be either a professional housewife or start studying for a master's degree, rather than work in a job she was not interested in.

In short, apart from one person, all of the mothers in the ballet studio considered themselves to be confined at home as professional housewives despite the fact that some wished to return to the workforce. They were unable to totally resist gender norms, not only because of their lack of economic independence and of social support for childrearing, but also due to the social expectations about middle-class mothers. These mothers conformed to the middle-class ideology that governs the conceptualisation of motherhood despite their wishes. According to Sugiyama, middle-class mothers tend to release their pent-up emotions through their children's activities because, as a result of their domestic confinement, they have little else to do except child-rearing (1996: 99). Similarly, mothers' frustrations or boredom from the strain of staying at home until their children at least reach school age was a part of reason for them to take their daughters to ballet lessons.

Mothers' and Daughters' *okeikogoto*

All of the mothers in Groups A and Nomo-san,¹⁷ had done more *okeikogoto* in their childhood than the mothers in Group B, and the majority had studied piano and traditional Japanese arts such as *sadō* (tea ceremony) and *kadō* (flower arrangements). When they were growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, western arts such as playing the piano and dancing ballet were considered to be privileged upper-middle-class hobbies. Traditional Japanese arts were also associated with the middle-classes in their youth (Chiba 2010; Kato 2004; Mori 1996). Therefore, mothers in Group A wished to reproduce their social class by taking their daughters to these *okeikogoto*. However, as explained in the Introduction, after

¹⁷ In this sense, Nomo-san shared similar tastes with mothers in Group A than other mothers in Group B.

the economic bubble burst, learning these activities, including ballet, became a less privileged activity and is now practised by people from all backgrounds. Ballet can now be learned almost anywhere, not only in ballet studios but in, for example, cultural centres, gyms and so on. In general, lesson fees are no more expensive than other *okeikogoto* and the majority of people can afford them. In fact one of the mothers in Group A, Iino-san, stated “Ballet had an *okeikogoto* image for only a few young ladies (*ojō-san*) before. But, now everyone can and tries to learn ballet.”

It is important to note that although lesson fees for ballet are the same as for other activities, such fees are applied only to adult beginners dancing in gyms and cultural centres. In ballet studios students are usually required to pay money for the stage performance separately; that is, if they want to take part in it at all. The price of the stage performance depends on the studio, but is approximately 30,000 to 50,000 yen (£125 to £208) per person. Since children are usually asked to or want to attend the stage performance, lesson fees for children’s ballet classes can be more expensive than other *okeikogoto*, which rarely require extra money. Moreover, ballet often requires mothers to spend more time for children than other *okeikogoto*. For example, it is common to ask mothers not only to take their daughters to and from the studio but also to remain at the studio during their children’s lessons (cf. Sasagawa and Ikeda 2010). As a result, all of the mothers in Group B whom I interviewed only took their daughters to ballet, while all of the mothers in Group A told me that they took, or tried to take, their daughters to other *okeikogoto*.

For example, several mothers in Group B such as Shida-san or Kato-san pointed out that because of their lack of economic capital they were simply unable to take their daughters to

multiple *okeikogoto*. Moreover they said that in order to take part in ballet, families are often required to be flexible and work around the children's schedules. Indeed, while some mothers in Group B said that it was difficult for them to take their daughters to other *okeikogoto* despite their desire; others said that they had not thought to do so until the girls directly asked them to. These mothers stated that they did not want to force their daughters, as noted above.¹⁸ However, when I interviewed the girls directly, many said that they wanted to learn something else as well as ballet, such as piano or figure-skating. One even said that she wanted to be a professional figure-skater.¹⁹ This proved to be a challenge for mothers in Group B because they could not fully devote themselves to their children's multiple *okeikogoto* both in terms of time and finance.

However, mothers in Group B seemed satisfied with the fact that their daughters were learning ballet because during the interview mothers themselves said they were not particularly interested in taking their daughters to other *okeikogoto*. As mentioned above, nowadays upper and middle-class people see learning ballet as a less privileged *okeikogoto* than before, but among working-class people ballet was not considered as a pure form of popular culture because the practice also requires more fees than other *okeikogoto*. When I asked mothers in Group B, all of whose daughters attended state schools, about the popularity of ballet among nursery school girls during interviews, they said that they often heard that ballet was popular among girls in the mass media, but they did not think that this

¹⁸ According to Honda (2008), less educated mothers do not have a strong reason to take their children to *okeikogoto* compared to highly educated mothers. Common reasons for continuing are their children's friends, they live nearby, and naturally, children's wishes etcetera (Honda 2008: 72-3).

¹⁹ According to the Benesse Corporation, learning figure-skating is a popular *okeikogoto* among girls recently despite the fact that it is very expensive because of skates and rink fees (<http://benesse.jp/blog/20080313/p1.html>, accessed January 2015). In the T.K. ballet studio many girls, including Kazuha-chan, Yui-chan, Nano-chan and Tsubomi-chan, told me that they wanted to learn figure-skating as well as ballet.

was the case in their schools. According to several sources, among nursery school girls the most common *okeikogoto* was not dancing ballet, but learning to play the piano, attending English conversation classes, swimming and *shūji* lessons.²⁰ As a result of taking their daughters to ballet lessons, mothers tried to distinguish themselves from working-class mothers inside and outside nursery schools. Moreover, the majority of mothers in Group B said that they took their daughters to ballet because their daughters' friends in nursery school were learning ballet. So, in order to secure their place within the school community it was essential for them to learn ballet.

Among mothers in Group B, ballet represents a form of economic, cultural and social capital. Therefore, through their daughters' ballet attendance, mothers in Group B are provided with an opportunity to gain cultural capital for their daughters as well as attain social capital for themselves through this form of consumption. While some mothers in Group B may not be able to afford to take their daughters to several *okeikogoto*, they may be satisfied with taking their daughters to only ballet because ballet alone is enough to qualify as a member of the school community and they can conspicuously show their middle-class status/consumption through their daughters. These mothers did not have specific expectations in regard to their daughters in terms of education or jobs, and said that they would respect their daughters' will, but they wished their children to maintain middle-

²⁰ There is no data for the popular *okeikogoto* taken by nursery school girls alone. But, according to the Benesse Corporation, the most popular *okeikogoto* among girls up to age 15 are *tsūshinkyōiku* (distance education), musical instruments, such as the piano or violin, and swimming. Ballet is ranked seventh. The most popular *okeikogoto* for nursery school children (both boys and girls) are swimming, musical instruments and *eikaiwa* (<http://benesse.jp/blog/20080130/p1.html>, accessed July 2012). However, the majority of children who dance ballet are girls who stop dancing after entering elementary school. So, it is difficult to tell exactly how popular ballet is amongst nursery school girls. According to another website, the three most popular *okeikogoto* among nursery school girls are piano, *eikaiwa* and swimming. Ballet is ranked fifth (http://www.videor.co.jp/press/2004/040628_2.htm, accessed July 2012).

class status.

By contrast, for mothers in Group A ballet alone was no longer enough to represent their class status, so they took their children to multiple *okeikogoto* in order to both display and reaffirm their social status. Indeed, not only is ballet expensive to learn as mentioned above, but also taking their daughters to more than one *okeikogoto* necessitates more economic capital; as Bourdieu notes “most cultural consumption also entails an economic cost” (1984: 116). Thus, mothers in Group A tried to distinguish themselves from working-class mothers as well as mothers in the shared field of middle class-ness by taking their daughters to more than one *okeikogoto*.

Moreover, many mothers in Group A at the T.K. and at the Fairy ballet studios stated that in their nursery schools most girls were learning ballet. Learning ballet, English conversation and piano are the three most popular *okeikogoto* for nursery school girls. During the Meiji Era only upper-class children were required to learn English as a part of their elite education (Imura 1980). However English has been taught as a compulsory course in most junior high and high schools since the end of the Pacific War, and in elementary schools since 2011. Therefore, not only learning the piano and ballet but also the English language used to signify upper-middle-class status, as they were the privileged western cultural activities.

However these three activities no longer automatically confer or denote upper middle-class status after the democratisation of elite culture. Nevertheless, mothers in Group A tended to prefer to enrol their daughters in two or all three of them to secure their position in the

school community and to reaffirm their social status. This reflects the mothers' wishes rather than their children's. When I interviewed the girls about why they started dancing ballet and what kind of *okeikogoto* they wanted to do apart from ballet, some of the girls were unable to answer my question or they had no opinion on the subject or preference of their own.

Both types of mothers used their daughters' ballet as a tool to provide cultural capital to their children as well as to secure their position within the school community. However, the way of showing social status was different depending on what group mothers belong to. While mothers in Group B considered enrolling their daughters in ballet to be enough to display their difference from working-classes, mothers in Group A took their daughters to multiple *okeikogoto* to distinguish themselves from others within their shared middle-class society. In particular, mothers in Group A attempted to distinguish themselves from mothers in Group B even in the ballet studio depending on different tastes such as their appearance, clothes, daughters' schools or *okeikogoto*, and their tendencies were also represented in the stage performance.

For example, on the day of the performance I observed many mothers in Group A dressed up in elegant suits surrounded by friends or extended family in the front rows. This was unlike mothers in Group B who wore casual clothes stayed with families at the edge of the hall. Moreover, while mothers in Group B tended to accept whatever roles their daughter dance in the performance, casting mattered for mothers in Group A. As noted above, taking part in the stage performance itself is expensive. Thus, while mothers in Group B considered the performance enough to show their middle-class status, mothers in Groups A

believed that their children's roles in the performance would reflect their position within the group of other middle-class mothers. For example, Kaoru-sensei told me about the careful casting process during our interviews:

I used to decide students' roles depending on their dance ability, but now I just do according to their age. The girls who enter the ballet studio in the same year get similar types of solos in terms of fame and difficulties. Otherwise, some mothers get upset and I keep losing students every performance.

Even after the casting, I saw some mothers in Group A chastise other mothers whose daughters had made mistakes during practice for the stage performance. These mothers believed that it would affect their daughters' dancing achievements/success in the performance. Moreover, as some mothers such as Hayashida-san or Inishi-san noted, mothers in Group A also wished their daughters to attain special skills through ballet and feel confident about themselves or become independent people. As explained above, in the post bubble era competency or special skills have become more important than before to assure a successful life in Japanese society in terms of education, job, or marriage. Unlike mothers in Group B who did not particularly expect their daughters to do more than reproduce their middle-class status through ballet, mothers in Group A expected their daughters not only reproduce their social status but also to become better than their mothers and to be a special kind of person (in order to have successful life). These are qualities bequeathed by ballet praxis which they think are important to live in the present day *kakusa shakai* (class different society), which will be discussed in detail at the end of this chapter. Nevertheless, due to ballet's particular nature, these middle-class mothers also expected their daughters to develop a western type of elegant body, namely slim with an upright

posture. This is because these physical attributes are viewed as physical capital (Bourdieu 1984), which indicates middle-class status and the promise of a successful life.

Part 2: The Body

A historical view of the westernised body

The desire to westernise the body has occurred as a result of the westernisation of Japan since the Meiji era. For example, after the Meiji period some people thought their bodies were smaller and weaker compared to westerners, thus they started eating red meat to make their bodies stronger (Tsukuba 1969: 109-113). Moreover, a western lifestyle, such as the use of chairs and western clothes also affected the ideals of Japanese posture and body proportion.

According to several scholars such as Nomura (1990) or Nishimura (2005), up until the Meiji-era upright posture was not an issue among ordinary Japanese. During the Tokugawa era, an upright posture was only permitted to upper class people in public, and inferiors such as children, women and peasants were required to lower their heads and bend themselves down in order to show their respect whenever in the presence of superiors. According to Nomura, the traditional posture among peasants was “that of a stooped back, with the chin thrust forward” (1990: 163). An old person with a hunched back was even considered respectable because it was a sign of long life. For example, prawns are often served at wedding parties to bring good fortune and to remind the guests of this specific posture (Nishimura 2005: 38-9). However, during the Meiji era western-style chairs and tables were first introduced into Japan and, as a result, the importance of good upright posture was emphasised and encouraged among ordinary Japanese by the government and intellectuals as a part of modernisation and westernisation. For example, Mishima (1898),

who was a member of the *Monbushō Gakkō Eisei* (Ministry of Education and School of Hygiene), called children who had bad posture spineally sick (*sekizui- wankyoku-shō*) and argued that sitting on chairs helped them to cure the sickness (Nishimura 2005: 26-7, 65-75). Although there were many critiques of Mishima's arguments by medical doctors, *Monbushō* added military gymnastics to the school curriculum in order to produce a good upright posture like westerners, and this has continued to the present day (Nomura 1990: 264). Several researchers of the day (Kidera 1886; Ōtori 1885; Shibata 1884; Takaki 1884) even argued that the reason why the Japanese did not have a good upright posture compared to westerners must be related to traditional Japanese manners such as sitting in *seiza* (sitting on bended knees), bowing deeply and hanging babies from the mother's back (seen as bad for both the mother's and baby's posture). They even tried to ban these customs. The Japanese sitting style, *seiza*, was not only believed to responsible for bad posture but also to that it made legs shorter and fatter than westerners' legs. Therefore, many people stopped sitting in *seiza* in order to have straighter and longer legs like westerners.

Furthermore, the Japanese starting to wear western clothes instead of kimonos and this shift in fashion changed the desired notions of appearance and aesthetics. Traditionally, Japanese beauty was focused on the face because body proportions were not obvious when wearing the Japanese traditional kimono and sitting in the *seiza* position. According to Hendry: "Japanese kimonos, perhaps more than any other garment, are literally 'wrapped' around the body" (1993b: 73). However, after wearing western clothes the focus of Japanese beauty also shifted to the body. According to Featherstone, modern western clothing was "designed to celebrate the 'natural' human form" (1991: 177). As a result, fashion in

modernity forced all women to think about their shape differently and modern Japan was no exception.

In short, after the westernisation of Japan, the Japanese started to consider upright posture and proportions as more important than before. The traditional Japanese body, which consisted of a large face and short, fat legs, was no longer deemed desirable. For example, during the Taisho period (1912-26), the *Moga* (the modern girl) was recognised “by her body and most specifically by her short hair and long, straight legs” (Silverberg 1991: 242). Nowadays, western forms of walking and body are regarded as the ideal among the Japanese. There are lots of courses to teach beautiful walking, namely walking with a long stride and good upright posture, at cultural centres. In fitness clubs, the *American Body*, being “skinny and sexy, with breasts emphasized” is the aim of the members (Spielvogel 2003: 157). Many scholars point out how the Japanese have been long fascinated by the western body-types (Clammer 1995; Kelsky 1996; Miller 2006; Rosenberger 1992a; Spielvogel 2003).

However, middle-class mothers do not want their daughters to attain this kind of western body with large breasts, wide hips and a narrow waist. Instead they expect their daughters to acquire western elegant figure, namely being long-legged, tall and thin (cf. Spielvogel 2003: 170) because such a figure can be a symbol of middle-class status as physical capital. Bourdieu (1984) argues that each class has a different preference for ideal body type (shapes). This ‘class body’ is reproduced through *habitus* and can be articulated through tastes, such as diet or exercise. According to Bourdieu’s survey the bourgeoisie prefer a slim and elegant body, and for this reason they tend to eat healthy foods, spend time and

money on beautification (mainly women) and on exercise. Working-class people by contrast value heavy, strong bodies. In other words, middle-class people try to cultivate healthy, beautiful and slim bodies in order to distinguish themselves from people below them on the social scale, who pay less attention to their own bodies (ibid.: 192-213). In the case of Japan, within upper-middle class society, Japanese femininity is linked to elegance with restraint (Clammer 1995: 212; Miller 2004: 92; Moeran 1995: 117; Tanaka 1990). For example, Moeran (1995) argues that Japanese advertising targeted the middle-classes by focusing not on sexuality but on elegance. Middle-class mothers also try to provide their daughters with a gender coded and idealized elegant middle-class feminized body.

A ballet body is generally described as thin with a long neck or limbs as explained in Chapter 1. Such figures are related to the ideal western body because ballet is based on western aesthetics.²¹ Therefore, classical ballet has become one of the ways that Japanese seek to achieve idealised, elegant, middle class proportions and this was one of the reasons for middle-class mothers to take their daughters to ballet class.

Upright posture, a flexible body and good proportions

During my interviews many mothers told me that they expected their daughters to develop a certain body-type through dancing ballet, such as a flexible body with an upright posture and ‘good’ proportions and so on. In this section I will provide a review of the interviews, primarily from the Fairy Ballet Studio, because many mothers there referred to the notion of the body as one of the main reasons why they took their children to ballet. I will use

²¹ The balletic figure has not always been associated with being thin, for example, during the 1950s ballet dancers in the West were often short with strong heavy thighs, and were not as flat-chested as many dancers nowadays.

initials because many refused to let me use their real names even during the interview.

Many mothers (63% at the T.K; and 45% at the Fairy) stated that the expectation of achieving a good upright posture was the main reason for them to take their daughters to the ballet class. Some mothers formed their ideas by looking at experienced dancers. For example, Y.T-san at the Fairy ballet studio said: “I want my daughter to have a good upright posture because most adults who have a good upright posture used to dance ballet.”

Also, several mothers said that they wished their daughters to achieve a good upright posture because they themselves thought that they were disadvantaged by the lack of it. In particular, Katsu-san at the T.K ballet studio was most keen for her daughter to have a good upright posture. She told me:

I myself do not have a good upright posture. I am *nekoze* (literally cats’ back, but colloquially round-shouldered). When I was in the upper grade of elementary school, I started feeling kind of shy about pushing my chest out (*munewo haru*). Since then, I have had bad upright posture.... Therefore, even if my daughter cannot be a good dancer, I wish her to have a good upright posture.

As pointed out earlier, it was once considered inappropriate, especially for women, to *munewo haru* because it was seen as a sign of arrogance. However, nowadays the importance of good upright posture is pervasive in contemporary Japanese society. For example, another mother at the T.K ballet, Matsuda-san, even said: “A person who has a good upright posture looks like a good person.” In Japan, a good upright posture is embedded within the concept of female grace. For example, a professional dancer in the

Berlin Ballet Company, Shoko Nakamura, stated in a web magazine interview that her mother took her to dance ballet so that she might have an upright posture as a woman (Taipei Navi 2008).²² Dancing ballet is considered one of the best ways to have an ideal posture by mothers.

Three mothers from both of the ballet studios pointed out that they expected their daughters to acquire a flexible body through dancing ballet. For example, Kawada-san said: “Since I do not have a *yawarakai karada* (a flexible body), I want Tsubomi [her daughter] to have a flexible body. If Tsubomi developed a *yawarakai karada*, I believe she can enjoy any kind of exercise or dance later, even if she does not continue dancing ballet.” A.T-san similarly noted: “I expect my daughter to have a flexible body through ballet. Even if she stops dancing ballet, because she will then have a flexible body, I think that it will be an advantage for her to do any kind of sport.”

Sawamoto-san said:

I think that it is useful for Asuka [her daughter] to attain a flexible body even if she starts other types of dance or sports such as *kikaitaisō* (gymnastics) or *shintaisō* (rhythmic gymnastics). I do not mind even if she does not continue dancing ballet, but I wish her to continue some exercise.

Clearly these mothers see ballet as a useful means for their daughters to obtain a flexible body. Like having an upright posture, in Japan developing a flexible body is considered as desirable by middle-class women. In part such a body is acquired by those who can afford to take care of their bodies through sports or *okeikogoto* (cf. Sasagawa and Ikeda 2002).

²² <http://www.taipeinavi.com/special/5004406>, accessed December 2011.

Also, as several mothers said during interviews that they chose ballet for their daughters because of the mobility of ballet skills and the perception that there was a universal positive impression of this gender coded body type. Even if their daughters need to move to other places such as outside Tokyo or abroad, girls can continue dancing ballet anywhere. Moreover, even if these young women choose to stop dancing ballet they have developed an internationally attractive balletic type of body. On the other hand, should they choose, they can even shift to another type of dance practice. Two mothers at the T.K. ballet and four mothers at the Fairy told me that they hoped that their daughters would develop good proportions or even a model's type of body through dancing ballet. For example, A.M.-san said; "In order to provide good proportions for my daughter, I decided to take her to ballet class when she was small. If I want her to have good proportions, I thought that it would be better for her to start dancing at an early age." N.H.-san even said: "My only hope is that my daughter will achieve good proportions by dancing ballet. It is very difficult to be a professional ballerina and I do not have enough money for her to do that. So, I gave up that kind of wishful thinking."

For these mothers, good proportions or a model-type of body is equivalent to being tall and slender. For example, Iino-san said: "I want my daughter to have good proportions (*sutairu ga yoi*), such as having a tall and slender body." In particular, J.H.-san and N.H.-san wished their daughters to have a model's proportions (*modelu taikai*) such as being *surāto* (tall and slender). They view tallness and being slender as important for their daughters in contemporary society. As explained above, middle-class Japanese think that such figures index western elegance. Indeed, my informants believed that ballet could provide their daughters with physical capital, although it is almost impossible to achieve certain physical

attributes just through dancing. These mothers told me that this particular type of body holds open the promise of having or sustaining a middle class status or lifestyle. A.M-san, for instance, said, “I think if my daughter develops a good appearance, she can have a better life in her future.”

By obtaining these middle class, westernised and elegant bodies, mothers believe their daughters could become more confident about themselves and moreover become good candidates for finding jobs and middle class marriage partners leading to what they deem or perceived to be a successful life, albeit a highly gender restrictive one. In sum, the most significant reason why mothers expected their daughters to develop these bodies through ballet was related to status consciousness. Bourdieu argues that the bodies of the dominant class are highly valued, and regarded as physical capital which can then be converted into cultural capital which can be utilised to gain economic capital. Therefore, attaining physical capital becomes a marker of middle-class status (1984: 192-213). Similarly, mothers who took their children to ballet class considered it as more important for their daughters to achieve a certain type of body than to develop actual dancing skills. The goal is certainly not to become a ballerina, though in rare cases this may happen. This is because these mothers believe that acquiring physical capital through ballet can elevate their daughters to a higher status and teach them to become more bodily self-aware and confident. Hamera argues that in a ballet studio in California, most middle-class parents did not perceive ballet as an aim in itself, but as a beautiful ‘supplement’ to social status (2007: 88). Many Japanese mothers also use ballet as a tool to provide social status to their daughters. The consumption and practice of ballet leading to what might be called a ballet habitus distinguishes one young woman from another, and so it is hoped, the potential for one

successful life over another.

Conclusion

Almost 90% of the mothers who took their children to ballet class were professional housewives. These women intended to stay at home until their children went to school following a strict middle-class ideology regarding the role of motherhood. They also tried to educate and cultivate their daughters to reproduce middle-class status as *kyōiku-mama*, and ballet proves to be an attractive option for them to achieve the aim. As discussed above, many mothers wished to provide their daughters with symbolic, cultural or physical capital through ballet. This is because although 90% of Japanese people claim to be middle-class, in the post-bubble era their status is at the risk of falling to the level of the working class. Thus, these middle-class mothers tried to provide special skills, confident and elegant bodies to their daughters in order to help them live successfully in Japan's increasingly competitive society (*kyōsō shakai*) through assuring good educations, jobs or marriage. Middle-class mothers wish their children to become 'winners', as Rosenberg describes (2013:102).

In other words, mothers tried to live vicariously through their daughters, and tried to find self-fulfilment as an expression of their agency within acceptable socio-cultural constraints. In Japan mothers have the power to make decisions as to how their children are raised and educated (Allison 1991; Sasagawa 2004). Some mothers prided themselves on the achievements of their children, so considered their daughters' ballet as a road to their own image and self-empowerment as well. According to Hendry, the status of full-time housewives is gained through both their husbands' occupations and children's achievements,

such as passing the entrance exams for elite schools or getting jobs at famous companies (1993a: 234-5). Therefore, by enrolling their daughters in ballet lessons, middle-class mothers tried to distinguish themselves from the working-class, or even others within their shared social field. Indeed, middle-class women were only interested in sharing time with and investing energy in people who had a similar lifestyle or shared tastes.

By enrolling their daughters in ballet, some mothers also aspire for their daughters to be something better than they themselves. For example, Sasagawa (2004) describes how mothers expect their unmarried daughters to achieve something which they could not because when they were young they had limitations in their life choices. Similarly, mothers in the ballet studios hoped that their daughters would enrich their life and have more choices as opposed to being confined at home as housewives. However, this does not mean that mothers expected their daughters to move up or beyond the limits of middle-class gender norms. As detailed above, they hoped to reproduce their daughters' social status through the consumption of ballet, via a fortuitous reproductive marriage (economic and social capital) or through the embodied benefits it bestows (physical and social capital). Indeed, several scholars point out that mothers often express seemingly contradictory expectations for their daughters; while mothers encourage their daughters to be independent and have freedom of choice, they often expect their daughters to find financially 'secure' partners and pursue the middle-class life style as they have (cf. Nakano and Wagatsuma 2004: 150; Ueno and Nobuta 2011: 43-44).

In the following chapters I explore how the sense of self and gender norms have been changed in different generations in the post-bubble era, and discuss how young unmarried

women and confined housewives utilised ballet for different aim or dream.

Chapter 4

Agency within Ballet's Hierarchy: Descriptions of dancing women

While the mothers I discuss in Chapter 3 took their daughters to the ballet studio in order to attain social status and find fulfilment through their children, in the following three chapters I focus on more mature women, from young *OLs* to middle aged women, who were interested in asserting their own individual identity through dancing ballet. As discussed in Chapter 2, after the economic bubble burst in the early 1990s, governmental support of leisure activities resulted in studios opening classes for mature women for the first time. As an outcome, not only girls, but also a growing number of adults began to dance ballet.

In the case of girls taken to ballet classes by their mothers, learning this form of dance has always been endowed with positive meanings in Japan such as beauty and elegance. It has also been viewed as an index of status. However, the case of adult women involves more complex issues. For example, since married women are expected to take responsibility for domestic work such as childrearing and caring for elders as outlined in Chapter 2, even if they take up hobbies, until recently pastimes were expected to be related to wifely or motherly duties such as sewing or cooking and not be pleasurable ends-in-themselves. Also, because of social perceptions regarding middle-aged women in particular, until the 2000s it was widely viewed as an embarrassment to start dancing ballet at this age. Wearing argues that older people are often regarded as undervalued and have difficulty being leaders in Western society (1995: 264). In the context of Japan it was hardly imaginable that middle-

aged women would enjoy putting on leotards and dancing ballet a generation ago.

Therefore, in this chapter I investigate why these mature women started taking ballet lessons and what they expected to obtain through dancing ballet. The first section gives a description of the Hikari Ballet Studio. Through relating my careful observations of the power relationships and hierarchy among the female beginners I illustrate how the politics within ballet lessons played out. I also describe occasional meetings which were held outside of this school. I participated in these gatherings in an attempt to discover the students' *honne* through listening to the conversations they had with each other, because talking in the ballet studio was discouraged. In the second section, I demonstrate how this particular ballet studio formed in parallel with the everyday hierarchical structure of Japanese society (cf. Nakane 1973; LeTendre 1994). I suggest unlike life in broader society, this studio provided a space for these adult women to assert their identity by negotiating and expressing their sense of self.

Discussion and Debate: Senses of self in the pre and post-bubble era

As argued in Chapter 1 in the pre-bubble era many scholars such as Bachnik (1992), Benedict (1967[1946]), DeVos (1985), Doi (1981), Nakane (1973), Plath (1980) or Smith (1983) have analysed the Japanese sense of self as tied to groupism (*shudan-shugi*), *habatsu* (cliques) as well as an entrenched seniority system. These scholars suggest that Japanese have a relational sense of self, and suggest that individuals tend to be alert towards group dynamics and shift their sense of autonomy according to the social situation such as *uchi /soto* or *omote / ura*.

However, from the 1980s individualism has been encouraged by the government much like in the neo-liberal West, and many scholars (both Westerners and Japanese) point out that the Japanese sense of self is not so distinct from that of Westerners because people in every society need some slippage in their sense of self to some degree (Ackermann 2004; Cave 2007: 36-7; Mathews 1996: 721; Slater 2003; Smith 1997; Sugiman 2010; Takano 2008; Yamagishi 2002). Takano (2008) even argues that Japanese can be analysed as more individualistic if compared to people popularly considered “Westerners”. Indeed, a highly individualised sense of self has been cultivated especially among young people, which has attracted considerable popular media attention. For example, in the late 1980s discussions of the *shinjin-rui* (the new human species) who rejected old hierarchal relations, or *otaku* who reject others and display self-absorbed and narcissistic tendencies emerged in media (cf. Kotani 2004: 39; Sakurai 2004: 23; Smith 1997:67). In addition, a distinct sense of individualism can be seen in how Japanese schools have recently tried to educate students to be increasingly *koseiteki* (individualistic) (cf. Cave 2007), and how middle-class parents see *koseiteki* as important for their children in order to assure a successful life in terms of education or employment as highlighted in the previous chapter. On the other hand, many scholars and the Japanese government point out how young people have become reluctant to become full-time workers including *salarymen* and instead opting to be *freeters* generally defined as young irregular workers, 15 to 34 years old, who are not housewives or in education (cf. Genda 2006; Honda 2005; Kosugi 2003; Kosugi and Mouer 2008; JILPT 2012). *Freeters* are often viewed as people trying to chase their dreams however some want to find regular work, but end up as *freeters* while others are thought to be waiting to find the right job (cf. Kosugi 2003).

Nevertheless, while an individualised self is particularly cultivated among Japan's younger generations, older generations often see such individualism as *wagamama*, and continue to consider social hierarchies as more important (cf. Bestor 2004; Hansen 2010: 150-172; Miller 2006; Sasagawa 2004). In this chapter I examine how inter-generational difference in terms of sense of self was cultivated among dancing women in the ballet studio.

Ethnography

Although I danced at three different ballet studios during my fieldwork, in this chapter I focus on the women who attended the beginners' class at the Hikari Ballet Studio in Tokyo.¹ As briefly introduced in Chapter 1, my fieldwork there was the longest period of research I conducted. I danced in the adult beginners' class twice a week from March to November 2007, which I will discuss in detail below. In order to research people's behaviour, learning habits and etcetera in greater detail, it was an advantage to be able to become part of their group, not just simply observing them but participating in dance with them (cf. Ingold 2011; Jackson 2013). Thus as mentioned in Chapter 1, despite my own experience of dancing ballet over many years, I attended the beginners' class to be closer to the embodied and affective dimensions of the student's lives and to gain greater rapport with them.

Dancing ballet with women at Hikari ballet studio

I danced at three different ballet studios during my fieldwork. Nearing end of my fieldwork at the Fairy Ballet studio and wanting to gain access to other studios, I asked the teacher if she could introduce me to another school. I told her that I was specifically interested in conducting participant observation with adult learners. Although there were adult class at

¹ For a more detailed description of the studio, see <http://hikari-ballet-studio.jp>, accessed in March 2013

the T.K Ballet Studio and Fairy Ballet Studio, I wanted to have more variety in terms of research participants. She told me to contact Hikari Ballet Studio, also in Tokyo. The head teacher there had been a member of the same ballet company as the teacher at Fairy Ballet Studio. I telephoned Hikari to ask the teacher for permission to conduct fieldwork there, and was told to come to the studio the following week. I was a bit surprised to obtain permission so easily because I previously had difficulties in accessing unfamiliar ballet studios. I was happy that my connections finally bore fruit in this particular case.

The Hikari Ballet studio was set up in 2004 by its owner and main teacher, Abe Hikari *sensei*. She had been a soloist in the Tokyo City Ballet Company. After retiring from professional ballet, she lived in London as a student on a dance scholarship and this mutual link to dance and life in the UK aided in our developing an easy rapport. After returning to Japan in 2002, she taught ballet to adult beginners at a culture centre in Shinjuku, a major centre in Tokyo. The the class was called “*otona no tame no shape up*”² (adult beginners’ class for getting in shape). It was successful in attracting approximately sixty adult beginner students. However, after closing in 2004 due to financial problems at the culture centre, Hikari *sensei* opened Hikari Ballet Studio.

Hikari ballet studio was not large compared to ballet studios in general, but in this studio there were a variety of courses for *yōjika* (four-year-old students), *shotōka* (students aged 5 to 7), *jidōka* C (1st and 2nd year elementary school children), B (3rd and 4th grade students), A (5th and 6th grade students), *seijin-chūkyū* (adult intermediate) and *seijin-*

² *Shape up* is Japanese-English and has a different meaning from ‘shape up’ in English. *Shape up* (*karadawo kitaete hikishimeru*) means losing weight, becoming slimmer, acquiring a toned or fit body, and so on.

shokyū (adult beginners). Thus, there were around a hundred students at the school ranging in age from four to sixty! In order to begin dancing in this studio, the students first needed to pay the *nyūkaikin* (joining fee) of 10,500 yen (approximately £50). After becoming a member, students had to pay monthly fees. There was no pay-as-you-go system. Monthly fees varied according to class level, but at all levels the fee per lesson was discounted if the students took more than one lesson per week. For example, if students in the adult beginners' class went to one lesson a week, the monthly fee was 6,300 yen (meaning that each lesson cost 1,575 yen), but if they attended lessons twice a week, the fee became 8,400 yen (meaning that each lesson cost 1,050 yen). This is a substantial saving for those students dedicated to learning ballet.

The adult beginners' class where I conducted much of my participatory fieldwork, had four classes each week (Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) and the majority of students attended lessons twice a week, not only because of the cost but also to improve their technique. This dedication was especially pronounced during the lessons leading up to performances. Students who took lessons twice weekly tended to take the Tuesday / Friday (11:00-12:20) classes or the Wednesday / Saturday (19:40-21:00 and 10:00-11:20) classes, due to their personal schedules in depending on the convenience of the lesson times. Apart from one elderly man, all the students in the adult beginners' class were women, with seven on Tuesdays / Friday and seventeen for the Wednesday / Saturday class. Interested in the age demographics of these women I collected their ages during interview. They ranged in age from being relatively young in their twenties and thirties to elderly in their sixties, but the majority of them were middle-aged in their forties and fifties. As pointed out in Chapter 1, I was originally interested in only unmarried young dancing women, but because of my

mutual relationships with older women during our interviews, I included them as research informants.

I interviewed all the students in the two beginners' classes with the exception of two, making a total of twenty-two interviews. The interviews were conducted at cafes and restaurants during lunch after the lessons. Sometimes for Saturday interviews, I conducted them in the studio's changing room, as some mothers preferred not to eat with me because their husbands and children were waiting for them at home. I used similar research techniques with this group of interlocutors as I had used at the T.K. Studio; like the mothers discussed in the previous chapter I observed them and conducted one-to-one semi-structured interviews. I prepared questions beforehand and during the interviews I recorded the conversations and took notes to prompt further questions. Most women talked to me for more than 30 minutes.

In general I feel my interviews went well and I began to interact with the students. However, my relationship with the teacher did not go as smoothly, and she twice raised objections to my interviews. The first time was a month after starting, when she told me that I should use a questionnaire instead of interviewing the students. Although I explained to her how important it was for me to conduct interviews for my research, she said the students were very busy and had no time to answer my questions. I told her that I would prepare a questionnaire for those who were busy, but I would carry on interviewing the others. She told me to at least show the list of questions to the interviewees before beginning. I was rather taken aback by her attitude, because I had just interviewed five people at the studio and every student had seemed happy to talk to me; indeed, the students were listening to

my conversation with the teacher and some of those whom I had already interviewed kindly told me that they had enjoyed talking to me, and that I did not need to worry about what the teacher had said. Fortunately, the teacher did not object after this and I was able to carry on interviewing.

However, a month after this incident the teacher spoke to me again. It was a Saturday and I was due to interview some beginners in the changing room after their class. However, as an intermediate lesson was scheduled to follow the beginners' class, the teacher explained that she would not be able to concentrate on her teaching if I was interviewing next door. I did not want to upset her, so I moved my interviews to new locations outside the studio and near the library and there were no more complaints. This teacher's strict attitude towards me might be related to her lack of trust in me because, unlike the other studios, Hikari was an unfamiliar venue. Moreover, at the beginning of my research some students kept their distance from me, while others even publicly showed that they felt uncomfortable around me. In general, my status at Hikari was as that of a stranger who did not belong to their group. However, because of my dual identity as a Japanese anthropologist and as a practitioner of ballet, as pointed out in Chapter 1, students gradually started to accept me as one of their own. By the time I finished at Hikari I had managed to conduct in-depth interviews with fifteen people, and because of the good relationships I fostered with my informants they organised a farewell party for me when I finished my fieldwork in November 2007 (discussed in Chapter 6). Below I mainly describe the Tuesday class since I built up my best relationships with students attending that session. This choice of focus was also related to my closeness to the Tuesday class representative.

A typical day of ballet lessons

I usually arrived at Sakura-shinmachi station around 10: 40 a.m. on Tuesdays and walked to the studio. This station is much quieter than many places in Tokyo because there are no *eki-biru* (station buildings), although there are many small shops around the station. After passing the shops, several houses appear. Although there are some small apartments and houses, most housing consists of large single dwellings. Walking past these houses and turning left at one of the biggest ones, there is a small building next to a pizza delivery station that was less luxurious than neighbouring ones. Walking down its steps one comes to the basement entrance of the studio. There is a notice saying “Hikari Ballet Studio”. I was to do fieldwork in this location for eight months.

Sakura-shinmachi where the school is located is on the outskirts of Tokyo proper and is half an hour from the city centre by train. Like Futako-tamagawa where the Fairy Ballet Studio is located, Sakura-shinmachi is another popular area for young couples with children. Due to its good schools and parks, many people would like to live in the area, but the high rent and other costs ensure that only middle-class people can afford to do so. According to one of the middle-aged women in the ballet class, the older residents in this area are former landowners, supporting the assertion that the area is generally middle-class.

However, more than half the students in the adult beginners’ class did not live near the dance studio. Many of them used to dance at the Shinjuku culture centre, Peare, where Hikari *sensei* used to teach. The majority of students said that they lived around the Shinjuku area. Therefore, after the closing down of the culture centre they began looking for a place where they could continue dancing ballet. Although many of their classmates

found other ballet studios near their homes or workplaces, these students decided to follow the teacher in order to continue learning under her since they liked her character and her teaching methods. As a result, many travelled more than an hour to come to the current studio.

When I arrived at the studio, my watch usually read around 10:50 a.m. I took off my shoes, put them on the shoe shelf and walked across the floor. Several middle-aged and elderly women such as Noriko-san (60 years old), always seemed to be the first to arrive, Kazuko-san in her 50s and Emi-san in her 40s were usually already doing stretches on the floor. They had changed into ballet outfits such as leotards, tights, ballet skirts and shorts, and had put on ballet shoes. The students put orange mats on the floor, which belonged to the studio, and did *junantaisō* (stretches) or chatted with each other on the mats. When crossing the floor, I might say to them, “*Ohayō-gozaïmasu*” (Good morning), even if it was afternoon or evening, because in ballet studios students use the morning greeting. It is like we were in show business.³ While some replied “*Ohayō*” or “*ohayō-gozaïmasu*” to me, others were too busy doing stretches or chatting. I would then head towards the changing room.

The changing room

Behind the dance floor there was a small space which was divided from the main floor by a curtain. This space was called the changing room and the teacher and students shared it

³ In Japan, people who work in show business tend to greet each other by saying ‘*ohayō-gozaïmasu*’ whenever they meet even at midnight. This custom seems to be related to their working hours, which are different from those of regular workers or business people. These words, which are peculiar to show business, are called *gyōkai yōgo* and are used in slightly different ways from the general Japanese public. In the ballet world too, *gyōkai yōgo* are sometimes used regardless of whether the dancers are professional or amateur. This bears some relation to the working hours of professional dancers, who often perform in the evening.

half-and-half mainly in order to change from their street clothes into leotards (and vice versa). Although I never entered the teacher's area, since it was divided off from the students' by a curtain, according to Noriko-san, the teacher kept a computer there to write the school's online monthly newsletter (*Hikari Ballet Tsushin*). She sometimes kept her dog, Alan, there as well. I could hear him moving around and sometimes barking. Occasionally he came out of the changing room and jumped around on the floor after the lesson.

Since all the students used the same changing room apart from the teacher, the students' area was not big enough for everyone. There were white storage boxes where the students could put their bags or clothes. Next to these there was a small white cabinet with several hangers, and some students hung their jackets there. There were several orange mats used for stretching, rolled and tied up with black strips of cloth in a box in the corner. There was also a mirror, a chair and a rubbish bin in the room. Below the clothes boxes were magazine racks, and the teacher arranged several dance magazines there such as *Clara*, *Croise* and *Dance Magazine*. Against the wall there was a white bookcase with many ballet *manga* such as *Swan* or *Arabesque* which the students could read freely.⁴ In the changing room, while changing into leotards, the students generally talked to each other. This was used as a kind of social space since the students could not talk to each other once the lesson had begun. In the changing room the students talked about general topics such as the weather, their clothes, leotards (the middle-aged women usually commented on or complimented the younger peoples' dance outfits). They also discussed interesting things that had happened to them in their daily lives and current affairs. However, the middle-aged women did not

⁴ As explained in Chapter1, numerous middle-aged women used to read these *manga* when they were small. The series has continued up to now, and younger generation enjoy reading them too, although the original heroines have been replaced by the daughters of the former heroines: social reproduction indeed!

mention their husbands, marriages, children or their in-laws in the class. They seemed to keep a certain distance from each other and tried not to bring up private issues.

It might well be that they simply did not mention these things in front of me, but during our interviews they would tell me about their problems at home such as the trials of looking after their mother-in-law or the ramifications of their husband's love affair. Most claimed that they never talked about such issues in class because they just wanted to enjoy dancing ballet or talking to their classmates. This is because many were there to socialize, dance, and forget about the mundane workings of home life of a point to which I return in Chapter 6. In sum, if a woman chose to speak about such matters to her classmates, she risked spoiling the atmosphere. One exception was during the Tuesday classes, where the middle-aged women seemed to know each other's hobbies. For example, they knew that Haru-san was in her 60s and studied pottery. They all knew why she did so; it was because her friend was a teacher. Also, they knew that Emi-san took extension courses at a university. In sum, they seemed more intimate with each other than those in the Saturday class. Once the rehearsals for the stage performance began, the students tended to talk almost exclusively about the performance such as whether they remembered the steps or what kind of stage it would be and so on.

Stretching before the lesson

After changing into my leotard and tying back my hair, I would pick one of the orange mats from the box and join the others in stretching on the floor. I would again say "*Ohayō-gozaïmasu*" to the students who were already there. There were seven regular students in the Tuesday class, aged from 29 to 60. Since this was a weekday lunchtime class, the

majority of the students were married middle-aged women; others were students or *OLs* on shift work. By contrast, in the Saturday class the students were working mothers, *OLs* or mothers who had small children who could ask their husbands to look after their children while they were in class.

Emi-san and Kazuko-san always sat on the floor with their backs to each other and would chat during the stretching. They seemed good friends and knew each other well since they had started dancing ballet almost at the same time five years previously at the culture centre, Peare, and both were middle-aged housewives. On the other hand, a few other students did not talk to the others very much. For example Noriko-san, a very good dancer in her 60s who had started dancing in her 40s, usually occupied a place in the front and would do different stretches from the others which involved using the barre. She was a very kind person. For example, in my first Tuesday lesson, she suggested that I do stretches in the front and dance near the mirror in the barre lesson. She said: “*Enryo shinaide*” (please do not hesitate). Later, during our interview she told me that she made an effort to talk to new students and to be friendly to them because she had had the unpleasant experience of being ignored by other students when she had first joined the class. This was related to the fact that there was a clear hierarchy in this ballet studio. She was positioned at the lowest level when she was a new member, a point I expand upon below. Fortunately, by the time I became good friends with her, she ranked high up in the hierarchy because she was a class representative, and was thus able to act as a gatekeeper allowing me much easier access to the other students.

In the Tuesday class some forms of dress varied, but everyone chose to wear leotards.

According to Yamamoto-san, who was married and in her late 30s, when she started dancing ballet in the culture studio in Shinjuku, none of them wore leotards or pink tights. The norm was for the students, including the young ones, to wear a T-shirt, *suetto* (sweatpants) or black tights. She said that she felt too shy to wear a leotard and everyone else seemed to have the same feeling as her. But, a few years earlier the *sensei* had asked the students to buy their leotards together and everyone started wearing them. For example, the older middle-aged women, such as Noriko-san, wore black T-shirts and a black leotard without tights. Emi-san, wore black ballet skirts over a black leotard with pink tights. Kazuko-san wore dark-blue T-shirts, black skirts and black lacy leggings. On the other hand, young women loved more colourful outfits; Sachiko-*chan*, who was 29 years old, wore rainbow-coloured ballet shorts over a blue leotard. Mika-san in her early 30s wore leotards and tights in pink without any outer clothing such as T-shirts or shorts. In short, while young women enjoyed wearing bright-coloured leotards and thought that these were ‘cute’ utilizing these clothes as a part of self-display, many middle-aged women tended to choose black coloured leotards covered with other items of clothing including T-shirts, skirts and leggings partly because they felt embarrassed to wear bright-coloured leotards at their age. I will return to this notion of fashion and body image in more detail in Chapter 5.

However, although it was a small group, some of the middle-aged women wore bright coloured leotards without T-shirts. For example, Rumiko-san who was in her 50s wore blue shorts and leotard with pink tights, and did not wear a T-shirt. It seems that if they felt confident about their body proportions or ballet skills, the middle-aged women tended to

start wearing bright coloured leotards and take off T-shirts.⁵ Indeed, during fieldwork many students told me that Rumiko-san had recently improved her skills greatly.

Just before 11 a.m. Hikari *sensei* would appear on the floor although she had arrived at the studio long before us. All of the students would greet her with “*Ohayō-gozaimasu.*” She was 40 years old with long dyed-brown hair with a fringe, and she tied her hair back with a hair-slide. She usually wore T-shirts and black or grey sweatpants or leggings with ballet shoes. Her outfits were just like what students used to wear and I never saw her wearing only leotards.⁶ The students would stop talking to each other and try to involve the teacher in conversation. They might ask her: “How was your weekend?”, “How is your dog?” or “Have you found a place for the stage performance?”

All of the students, apart from one from Osaka, used honorific language to talk to the teacher even if most of them were older than her, a point I shall return to in the ‘Dancing in rows’ section. In general, students tried to show their respect to her. For example, whenever the students saw the teacher’s dog, Alan, at the studio, they told her how lovely he was. It sometimes sounded like a compliment to the teacher. Sometimes the teacher would ask the students questions as well, such as “How is your knee feeling?”, “Did you see the Kirov Ballet on TV last night?” and so on. The teacher would not use honorific language to speak to the students even if they were older than her. Instead, the teacher generally called them by their first name and added the suffix *-chan* for younger students and *-san* for the older

⁵ Similarly, Spielvogel mentions that in fitness clubs women who have confidence in their “body, appearance and/or dance skills” tend to show their body (2003: 100).

⁶ In some ballet schools, the teachers were asked not to cover their body and to wear only leotards and tights in order to attract students. Although Hikari *sensei* covered her body, many students described her as *kawaii* (cute), a topic which I will discuss further in Chapter 5.

ones. For example, in my case she called me *Saya-chan* because I (Sayako Ono) am younger than her. According to Bethel, the suffix *chan* is normally used for children, among family members and those who have grown up together. It is sometimes used with people belonging to the same group (e.g. the same company or *okeikogoto* class) who are younger or the same age, and it indicates mutual familiarity or an intimate relationship (1992: 115). Although I did not ask the students what they thought about it, I read in a ballet magazine that students, especially middle-aged women, love to be called by their first name because in daily life they are usually referred to by their husbands' last name or are known as the mother of so-and-so (*~san no oka-san*). However, in the ballet class they are identified as individuals rather than through their relationship with someone else.

The students also called the teacher by her first name although they put *-sensei* after it. If some students were still in the changing room, the teacher would always say: "*Hajimemashō*" (Let's start the lesson) and they would reply: "*Sumimasen*" (Sorry), and then come out from the changing room, or "*Hajimete-kudasai*" (Please go ahead) and continue changing. Then the teacher would say: "*Sa, hajimemashō.*" The teacher and students would do a reverence (a ballet bow) and Noriko-san would always add: "*Onegaishimasu*" (if it pleases you).

The slow tempo of classical music would begin and the students would follow the teacher by doing abdominal crunches very slowly on the mats. Then, the teacher would stop the music and students would pair up and do ten abdominal crunches with each other. To do this, some students tried to be next to their friends or familiar people before the lesson; when I started the lessons here, some students would not come and lie next to me. Then, the

teacher would re-start the slow music and we would move on to doing exercises to help promote an upright posture. For example, while sitting, we would bend our knees and do abdominal breathing. All the movements were routine exercises, so the teacher did not need to explain to us how to do it although she would tell us what kinds of exercise we should do next. After that, we would do another stretch: while sitting, opening the legs wide and stretching the body over both legs and over the space between the legs. After that, the music would become more up-tempo and we would do neck and arm stretches and then finish. Roughly rolling up our mats, we would put them in the changing room quickly and then each individual would take a place at the barre.

Barre lessons

In this studio there were two barres attached to different walls in an L-shape; one wall was bare and the other had a mirror, and therefore these spaces can be referred to as the wall barre and the mirror barre. When classes were crowded, as they were on Saturdays, the students would set up another portable barre in the middle of the floor. The students could basically stand anywhere they wanted, so it was a kind of *hayaimonogachi* (first-come, first-served) as to where they would stand during the barre lesson.

It was interesting to observe where students danced in relation to the barres. In general, it was good to dance at the mirror barre because you could see yourself in the mirror. Although it was a personal preference, students at mirror bar could also feel and show their dominance in the studio because other students were behind them. Questions emerged as I noted what kind of students tended to get the good positions. Was position related to power relationships or hierarchy, based on seniority for example? Or, were they related more to

their skills as a beginner or a more experienced dancer? It was clear that some students consistently managed to occupy better positions than others. On Tuesdays I could not see much competition since the students were friendly with each other, and also there were fewer of them, usually only seven, and they tended to occupy the same place every time. In general, while most beginners danced at the mirror barre, experienced dancers tended to dance at the wall barre. I usually danced there as well, but occasionally I danced near the mirror since one of the middle-aged beginners, Emi-san, sometimes kindly urged me to do so. Furthermore, experienced dancers danced at the head of the barre because it was difficult for beginners to dance without seeing someone's movements in front of them. In general, in Tuesday's class, the middle-aged women were very kind and did not appear to be pushy or competitive.

On the other hand, on Saturday since there were seventeen students and they behaved more individualistically, not everyone was friendly with each other. There was an intermediate class after the beginners' class, so several intermediate students attended this class too. On Saturdays the students seemed to be more competitive about finding a good position at the barre. As in the Tuesday class, while most beginners danced at the mirror barre, experienced and intermediate dancers normally danced at the wall barre. However, since there were many people, the beginners who had not managed to find a place at the mirror also danced at the wall.

Moreover, unlike Tuesdays when experienced dancers danced at the head of the barre, on Saturday beginners tended to be at the head of the mirror barre. This is because even if a student had not memorised the steps, the teacher would be standing next to them during the

barre lesson and remind them. For this reason a ‘senior’, who might be a beginner but had been attending lessons at the studio longer than the others, usually occupied this position. I will return to this point below. On the other hand, an experienced dancer would typically dance at the head of the wall barre; on Tuesdays none of the beginners wanted to dance there. As soon as students settled in their position, the teacher would start the barre lesson.



Photograph 1: Adult beginners in Hikari Ballet Studio are practising *tendu* at the mirror barre (taken by the author)

The barre lesson in ballet consists of basic exercises while holding onto the barre with one hand. According to the Ballet Dictionary of the American Ballet Theatre, these exercises are “essential for developing the muscles correctly, turning the legs out from the hips and

gaining control and flexibility of the joints and muscles.”⁷ At the Hikari Ballet Studio, before the music started the teacher would demonstrate the steps and the students ‘memorised’ them by dancing or by copying them with their hands although only a few experienced dancers could do this. At this ballet studio, half of the students did not wear ballet shoes during the barre lesson because the *sensei* recommended bare feet. Without shoes the teacher could easily check if their toes were straight or not.

After the explanation, the teacher would put on the music and the students would start dancing, always from the right side while holding the barre with the left hand. At first, students would usually practise a *plie*⁸ (a bending at the knees) to slow classical music. After practising it on each side, the teacher would stop the music and demonstrate the next movement, such as *battement tendu* (with one leg remaining stationary, the other foot slides and stretches without lifting the toes from the floor), *battement jeté* (similar to the *battement tendu* but is done at twice the speed and one foot rises off the floor) and so on. Then, the students practised more complicated movements such as *rond de jambe* (a circular movement of the leg) or *battement fondu développé* (one leg is slowly bent at the knee. The other foot points at the ankle, then extends to point in the air). To aid in remembering these steps, the teacher sometimes demonstrated them to us more than once. Near the end, we would do another stretch using the barre: placing one leg upon the barre by hooking the heel over it, and then stretching. Finally, the students usually practised *grands battements* (with one leg remaining stationary, the other leg is raised from the hip into the air) with up-tempo classical music, and then the barre lesson would be finished.

⁷ <http://www.abt.org/education/dictionary/index.html>, accessed January 2015.

⁸ Ballet terms are explained in more detail in the glossary.

The students would leave the barre and gather in the centre of the room to prepare for the centre lesson.



Photograph 2: A book explaining how to practice *battement tendu* and *battement tendu jeté* in Japanese (Shimizu and Morishita 1988: 20)

During the lesson, the teacher generally used French terms to explain the ballet steps. But, although the terms were French, they tended to be pronounced in a Japanese style as ‘Japanese-French’, and written in *katakana*.⁹ For example, *rond de jambe* is pronounced *rondo jampu*. Most people including myself did not know the French words themselves, but understood the meanings and remembered them as ballet terms.¹⁰ English and Japanese

⁹ The Japanese language consists of three different scripts, *hiragana*, *katakana* and *kanji*. *Kanji* came from China and are based on Chinese characters. *Hiragana* and *katakana* are syllabaries. *Hiragana* is based on ancient Japanese (*manyō gana*) and is used for ‘native’ terms and concepts, while *katakana* is used for foreign terms (apart from Chinese) and *giongo* (onomatopoeia). Therefore, ballet terms which are based on French are described using *katakana*.

¹⁰ This can be seen not only in Japanese ballet classes but in other non-French speaking classes as well. However, in British ballet classes being able to translate the terms and know their meanings is part of taking the ballet grade exams (RAD).

were also used during the lessons. For example, the teacher sometimes counted the rhythm in English, such as waltz steps, and also sometimes explained the movements in Japanese, such as ‘*ōkina jampu*’ instead of *grande jeté* (the legs are simultaneously lifted to 90 degrees with a corresponding high jump). However, most of the time Japanese-French was used by the teacher, and this would seem to relate to how the Japanese have attempted to preserve the privilege of ballet as a “globalised” medium, as argued in Chapter 2.

The teacher played classical music throughout the lesson. Many students told me that they loved ballet music before starting to dance, and others said they started to love it after learning ballet. Some of them started listening to classical music at home, and said that they felt happy or healed (*iyasareru*) when listening to it, an issue which I explore in chapter 5.

Centre lesson: Dancing in rows

In a typical class the centre lesson would come next. In this lesson the students practised *enchainement*, that is, combining several ballet steps into a dance movement, but they were not allowed to hold the barre and had to control their bodies by themselves. They needed to use both arms and legs for dancing, which differed from the barre lesson and it seemed very complicated to remember the steps for some beginners, especially for the middle-aged women.



Photograph 3: Practicing *enchainement* (taken by the author)

At first, students would start practising *enchainement* in rows. As in the barre lesson, before dancing the teacher would demonstrate the steps each time in front, either facing the students or facing away from them, and the students would memorise the movements. At this point the places where the students would dance had not yet been decided, although they were almost all in their preferred positions. After the demonstration, the students would line up and the centre lesson would begin. The exercise usually started with a slow tempo *enchainement*, such as *battement tendu* in the *croisé* (crossed) position or *développé* (with one leg remaining stationary, the other leg is slowly extended to an open position in the air and held there with control). The students then practised more up-tempo movements such as *assemble* (the dancer jumps with one leg while extending the other leg to their side

in the air. The dancer then lands by bringing the feet together) or *jeté* (a jump from one foot to the other in which the moving leg is brushed into the air). Each exercise was practised on each side, always starting from the right foot.

In each row, there were three or four people, and the composition of the rows stayed the same throughout the lesson. On Saturday the rows sometimes alternated; that is, after performing a step, the teacher would instruct the front row of students to move to the back. However, this did not happen often. In fact, students who were not in the first row from the beginning of the lesson had little chance of moving into it during the centre lesson. As in the barre lesson, it was clear in the centre lesson too that some positions were better than others, and that it was better to dance in the front. The students in the front could see themselves in the mirror clearly and also had more opportunity to be advised by the teacher than those in the back. I thus tried to investigate who danced at the front. Again a question arose, was it related to power relationships or the hierarchy of the ballet studio?

The competition to secure a better position in the centre lesson was slightly different from in the barre lesson, where few ballet skills were required in order to dance in front of a good mirror viewing position. In the barre lessons, apart from the two people who danced at the head of each barre, every student could see the movements of those dancing in front of them. However, in the centre lesson, if they wanted to be in a good position, that is, in front, they needed to memorise the movements because there was no one in front of them from whom they could copy the movements during dancing; although it was not impossible to see the movements of students next to you, it was not easy. Therefore, even some of the middle-aged women who occupied good positions at the barre hesitated to dance in the

front during the centre lesson.

As mentioned above, on Tuesdays students were less competitive and occupied the same places in the barre lesson, and the same features were observed in the centre lesson. There were always two rows of students dancing and the same students, two middle-aged experienced dancers and one young beginner, always danced in front. There was no competition, but the line-up appeared to be less flexible. I concluded that although it was not obvious, there was an established hierarchy in the Tuesday class.

On Saturdays there were four to six rows depending on the number of students. And, since there were more students there was more obvious competition to dance in front. In this class, the front positions were predominantly held by middle-aged women; however, since they had to memorise the steps in order to be in front, only women who were confident about their skills danced there. Of course, there is nothing wrong with being in front and it is much better than being shy and always dancing in the back; a dancer can improve their skills more by dancing in front. However, during my fieldwork I rarely saw skilful young dancers in front, and I wondered why the young and skilful dancers always danced in the back rows. I only saw one experienced dancer, Etsu san, take a position at the front of the class, and she took this spot for a very particular reason. She was 40 years old, single and had started dancing in her childhood. According to Noriko-san, Etsu-san's mother was a leader of a *habatsu* when she danced at the studio in her 60s, and this fact seemed to enable Etsu-san to dance in the front, a point which I will discuss further below. Several times I witnessed her force herself to the front of the class. She competed with other confident middle-aged women in order to do this. On the other hand, young but more experienced

students stayed at the back quietly even if they were better dancers than the majority of the middle-aged women. In sum, the position where women danced was related to their rank in the hierarchy outside and inside the ballet studio. For example, while older women were respected by younger ones, new members of the ballet studio were inferior to seniors, which I analyse in detail below. Rarely did I see middle-aged women asking younger women to dance in front during the centre lessons.

Exercises across the floor starting from one corner

In this sequence of exercises the students would practise more dynamic *enchainement*, including jumps or pirouettes. Students would begin by dancing from one corner and do steps such as *pas de chat* (a movement resembling a cat's leap) or *jeté entrelacé* (this *jeté* is done in all directions and in a circle) across the floor. Again, the teacher would demonstrate the movements before each exercise from the corner and students would follow her. Usually students made groups of three or four and started dancing from the right-hand corner as a group and then moved diagonally to the other side, although sometimes they danced one-by-one with the whole class watching. As in the row practice, once students made groups the members tended to stay in the same position even if they moved to another exercise.



Photograph 4: Practising from the corner (from a scene of soap opera, *Primadam* (see Chapter 2)).

All of this seems to be particularly Japanese. A British friend who lives and dances ballet in Tokyo told me how she confused others when she did not dance in the same group or stood in a different spot within that group. She said that when she danced in adult classes in London, people tended to just muddle in and dance where there was space. Similarly, the dance magazine *Swan* noted that in France students do not dance with the same group every time (2007: 25). In Japan, dancing in the same group shows that there was again a consistent structure of hierarchy operating in the formation of the groups.

However, interestingly, when the students danced from the corner, there was less competition to secure a better position. Basically, most middle-aged women did not want to

dance in the first group and let the younger or experienced dancers go first. I think that probably the middle-aged women found it more difficult to remember the steps and so needed to see others when they danced from the corner. A few confident middle-aged women sometimes danced in the first group, but still behind younger members. So, for example, in a group of four people, the older dancers could usually watch the two younger dancers ahead of them. I always found it interesting to see how middle-aged women who had been confident during the barre or centre lessons became hesitant when they danced from the corner. They often said: “*Dōzo osakini*” (please go ahead) to young or experienced dancers, which they rarely said during other lessons during practice. This was not a simple act of courtesy however; it indicated that ballet skills can sometimes be yet another factor in determining where dancers are positioned, a point I shall return below.

During interviews many students said that at the Hikari Ballet Studio there was less competition, hierarchy and fewer *habatsu*. They said everyone was nice to each other and they were happy to be in that class. Nevertheless, though not obvious at first glance, competition clearly remained. There were no arguments or fighting about occupying the good positions during the barre or centre lessons, yet, I could detect that there was something going on underneath. As mentioned above, while the middle-aged beginners occupied the front of the mirror barre, the young or experienced dancers tended to be at the wall barre, dancing at the back. The meekest beginners tended to dance at the third barre, set in the middle of the floor. Moreover, on Saturdays I usually danced at the wall barre, and sometimes at the barre in the middle of the floor, but I seldom had the chance to dance at the mirror despite being in the class for eight months. I failed to dance in the good positions although while I was there, there were no longer any obvious *habatsu* in the

studio. However, one of the middle-aged women, Noriko-san, told me that even in this ballet studio there had been *habatsu* not long before my arrival.

Dancing in rows (take two)

After practising moving from the corner, the students danced in rows again. Suddenly nobody seemed to care about their position. This was perhaps because these were simple exercises, such as *changements* (springing steps while changing their feet in the air) or *échappé sauté* (a spring that finishes in a *demi-plié* in the open position). Therefore, the students were not interested in watching themselves in the mirror while dancing, although it was still important to see themselves during the jumps and other moves. It could also have been because they were just too exhausted after dancing. Finally, the teacher and students practised *épaulement* (a movement of the torso from the waist upwards). The class ended with the same reverence as at the beginning, and with Noriko-san saying “*Arigatō gozaimashita*” (Thank you very much).

The lesson finished at 12:20 p.m. On Saturdays, every student took a towel from the box provided by the teacher and cleaned the mirrors although this was not done on Tuesdays. While polishing, some students talked to each other about general topics, but mostly they were very quiet and keen to clean up. Some of the shorter students including myself could not reach the top of the mirrors and had to ask the taller students for help. Since there were not enough towels for everyone, students who could not get towels asked to take turns although it was not such a demanding job. Nobody seemed to want to be seen doing nothing by the others or the teacher. There was also another mirror in the changing room and one of the students always went to polish it as well.

The students' diligent attitude towards cleaning appears to be related to moral, religious or ritual practice. Reader notes how Zen Buddhist monks practise cleaning, such as polishing the floor or washing their faces as part of a "ritualized religious practice" (1995: 232-3). Similarly, ordinary Japanese people consider cleanliness both as everyday hygiene and as a moral state of purity (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984a: 34). Cleaning seems to help people to attain a sense of harmony, where they consider a communal good to be as important as an individual one (Reader 1995: 239). As noted, at the beginning of the pre-bubble era the significance of harmony among groups was often emphasised, thus several scholars described how cleaning, in many institutions such as schools or companies, was done in order to create harmonious social relations (Kondo 1990: 84-5;) this, it is presumed, makes a "working relationship successful and enjoyable" (Rohlen: 1974: 47). However, as noted above, after the economic recession of the 1990s, the pre-bubble harmony and groupism as well as *habatsu* and the seniority system were disrupted by an increasing emphasis on the individual, thus young people try to assert their identity through individual activities. However, in general since older generations continue to consider hierarchies as important, their sense of self often continues to be expressed within existing ideological hierarchies (cf. Ortner 2006). This is certainly the case in a number of Japanese companies (Ogasawara 1998) and schools (Allison 1991; Slater 2003), and, I contend that similar such moral and hierarchal practices were enacted in ballet studios during my fieldwork. Indeed, within Hikari Ballet Studio, there was a palpable tension between the middle-aged dancers and young dancers in terms of assuring the better position during the ballet lessons; while middle-aged women occupied the good positions, younger students stayed at the back. I suggest that this was related to how women of different generations cultivate a sense of self within the framework of acceptable cultural and social relations, a point which I will detail

in the analytical section below.

After cleaning, some women chatted with the teacher about ballet steps that they could not understand during the lesson or about problems with their body condition and other related topics. Some practised the day's steps on the floor, but one by one they would go to the changing room. At the Tuesday class, since they did not roll up their mats properly in the middle of the lesson, they did so afterwards, tying them up and putting them in a box in the corner of the changing room.

On Tuesdays, in the changing room after the lesson, the students tended to chat with each other. They would talk about general topics, such as what they planned to do the following weekend or during the bank holiday. Although these subjects differed little from those discussed before the lesson began, after the lesson almost every student would be there, so the chatting became more energetic. Although they were good friends with each other, the women still tended to divide into two groups according to their ages: middle-aged and elderly women, and younger ones. However, interestingly, Noriko-san tended to talk to the younger group, despite being 60. This seemed to be related to her background; judging by her educational background and her husband's job, she was less middle-class than the other middle-aged women which I will expand upon in the analytical section. For the present, I suggest that the middle-aged women and Noriko-san identified with each other because of their distinctions to borrow from Bourdieu (1984). In short, they shared tastes and lifestyles that differed from others. In fact, Noriko-san seemed to be more interested in talking to young people. For example, one day the young students were excitedly talking about beauty tips and Noriko-san happily joined in. One of the young students, Sachiko-*chan* (29

years old), was talking about nail art and having eyelash extensions (*matsuge no ekusute*). She said that she went to the beauty salon once a month in order to get her nails done and have eyelash extensions applied (she added an incredible 50 eyelashes to each eyelid). These stories attracted the young students as well as Noriko-san, although the other middle-aged women seemed less interested in the topic and talked about other issues. However blending right in, Noriko-san began discussing her beauty regime as well. She said that she had her eyebrows and eyeliner semi-permanently drawn on and paid 70,000 yen (approximately £290) for that service. Indeed, Japanese are among the largest cosmetic consumers in the world and their make-up style has been heavily influenced by the West since the pre-war era. According to Miller, even during the 1930s Western-style make-up, such as emphasising the eyelashes, was popular amongst Japanese women (2006: 23-4). However, such 'beauty up' regimens, like eyelash extensions, are mainly popularised by young women, so middle-aged women in the studio cared more about wearing makeup that whitening their faces because, as noted above, this has long been a sign of middle-class femininity

On Saturday there were far more people in the changing room, including the intermediate students who were preparing for the next lesson. The students therefore tried to change as quickly as possible, instead of chatting. However, the easy-going students tended to talk to others and the room was never quiet. In particular, Ryoko-san, who was 35 years old and married, often talked about her one-year-old daughter. As mentioned above, in this studio people rarely discussed their personal life with each other, so her chatting might have been seen as inappropriate and been resented by the others. However, because of her outgoing character (she told interesting stories to everyone) and because of her *Osaka-ben* (Osaka

dialect) which is often associated with comedians, people enjoyed listening to her stories and conversed with her. Moreover, she was the only person who could speak to the teacher without using honorific language, which the teacher seemed not to mind, seemingly enjoying talking to her as well. In Osaka class distinctions indicated by individual tastes are less emphasised compared to Kyoto or Tokyo where middle-classes appear more constrained towards conservative displays of refinement; that is to say distinctions in Kyoto, often thought of the cultural capital of Japan, or Tokyo, the seat of government, are quite distinct from Osaka which is often considered to be the home of freewheeling business acumen. In regard to the case at hand, most students in this studio were middle-class people who lived in Tokyo, and as far as I could tell from her educational background and husband's job, Ryoko-san was also middle-class. However, her Osaka background made her different and more acceptable even if she did not behave in the manner expected of middle-class housewives in Tokyo. Ryoko-san broke the boundary between what was considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviour among 'elite' middle-class women. She seemed more spontaneous and relaxed than the majority of the polite and well-mannered housewives in the ballet classes.

On Saturdays students tended to return home individually or in small groups, but on Tuesdays students usually walked back to the station together, and in small groups they occasionally went to have lunch together. But, sometimes when the young people were too busy chatting or were practising extra ballet steps and did not leave the studio immediately, the middle-aged women would depart first or would kindly wait for the younger people outside the studio for a while. When we all walked back to the station together we chatted with each other. The students divided into two groups again; the middle-aged and elderly

women, and the young women, with Noriko-san in the latter group. I was involved with both groups, and when I talked to the middle-aged women, they tended to ask me about my studies or life in England, such as how long I had lived in London, which department I belonged to and what I was researching. Young people seemed to be less interested in these issues and talked about more general topics, such as holidays or ballet steps. I never talked about, nor did they ask me about, any specifics regarding my personal life such as family or boyfriends, outside of exchanges during our formal interviews. Noriko-san played the role of *osewagakari* (caring person) for the younger women, and although they did not exchange personal stories with each other, young students sometimes discussed their personal problems with Noriko-san only. However, Noriko-san did not speak to the middle-aged and elderly women very intimately.

In short, although students were friendly with each other in the changing room or on the way home (at least when I was observing them), hierarchies and a sort of “inside and outside” group consciousness remained. However, there were limitations in regard to my abilities to listen to their conversations at the ballet studio, thus I decided to participate in some occasional meetings in order to investigate their power relationships further.

Having lunch together

One example of such an encounter was a day after the Tuesday class when I had lunch with five other students at a restaurant near the studio. At this time I got to hear them gossip about other students, something which I had never heard them do at the studio. They first began talking about Yuko-san who was 30 years old and a former law student. She used to dance with them during the Tuesday / Friday morning classes, but changed her lesson to the

Wednesday evening class because she had landed a job. However, these students wondered whether she might quit her new job and come back to the Tuesday / Friday classes because she had looked so tired when they saw her on the way to the studio (she lived in the neighbourhood). Then, Shino-san who was in her 30s and joined the Tuesday / Wednesday class, mentioned Hirama-san, with whom she had studied on Wednesdays. She said that Hirama-san, who was 60 years old and the only male student in the beginners' class, had a problem remembering the steps and was even asked by the teacher to practise skipping during Wednesday's class. Shino-san also said that a new student had joined the lesson the previous Wednesday. The newcomer was a young and experienced student, so Shino-san thought that she might have joined the intermediate class as well because she was talking to Mika-san who was in her 30s and who also went to both the beginner and intermediate classes. Shino-san said that experienced students are always welcome. During lessons, students (particularly young ones) seemed to check on other students and their dance abilities although they seldom talked about them at the studio.

The women then started talking about the intermediate class. They advised Noriko-san to join it because they thought she was a good dancer. However, Noriko-san said that she could not join because of the practice time for the intermediate class; weekday evenings and Saturday mornings were not suitable for her. Shino-san cynically queried: "So, is the practice time the only thing that keeps you from joining the intermediate class?" Noriko-san denied this and in a rare, somewhat acidic, response she asked Shino-san: "Why don't you join the intermediate class?" Shino-san did not reply. Instead she was wondering if there was anyone who had moved to the intermediate class from the beginners' class and Noriko-san said: "Probably only Natsuko-chan." Sachiko-chan, who was 29 years old and

had recently joined the ballet class, said: “I have not met Natsuko-*chan* yet, but I have often heard her name at the ballet studio.” Shino-san explained to Sachiko-*chan* that:

Natsuko-*chan* used to dance ballet when she was small [in reality I knew it was for only a year]. She restarted dancing ballet when she became adult and had even changed jobs from Tasaki-Shinju (Tasaki Pearl Cooperation)¹¹ to her current job because the working hours in the former were not convenient for her to go to the ballet lesson.

Their interest in Natsuko-*chan* seemed related to their wish to move into the intermediate class as well. For example, when I joined the intermediate class after the beginner’s class on Saturday, many young beginners, including those who had barely talked to me before, asked me if I would attend the class and wished me luck. In particular, Shino-san appeared competitive with other beginners. She assessed other students’ dance abilities and sounded as if she disliked newcomers unless they were experienced dancers. Her agitation was related to her interest in wearing toe shoes in the intermediate class, and her concerns seem to be shared by other students, which I found out when I joined another meeting.

Joining a *konshinkai*

In September the Hikari ballet held a *konshinkai* (a convivial meeting) on Saturday and I went along. The *konshinkai* started at 7 p.m. at Sakura-shinmachi and twelve students came. There were few students from the Saturday class because we had had a lesson in the morning. Since the majority of students lived a long way from the studio, they did not bother to come to Sakura-shimachi again after returning home. However, Fukuyama-san

¹¹ Tasaki Shinju is one of the largest jewellery cooperatives in Japan, and creates and sells its own products - mainly diamonds and pearls (www.tasaki.co.jp). The sellers there work in shifts and Natsuko-*chan* was one of them. I’ll return to this in more detail in chapter 6.

and Yamamoto-san managed to come to the *konshinkai* despite the fact that it took two hours just to return home after the morning lesson; I was impressed by their dedication to the studio. About an hour later Hikari-sensei arrived and we toasted her. She said: “If we practise *Les Sylphides*¹² seriously, it will be very beautiful, so all of us should work very hard.” She continued by saying: “I want to teach more advanced steps for the stage performance, so I want to take a longer time for the centre lesson and less for the stretches. Is it alright for you not to do stretches anymore?” However, most students told her they would be worried about starting the lesson without stretching. So, Hikari-sensei decided that we would continue doing stretches, but students should do abdominal crunches by themselves before the lesson in order to reduce the time spent stretching. Then, she announced to us, “All of the students who want to be on the stage should *godo-rensyu* (practise together) from October, including some Sundays!”

Noriko-san was taking notes about what Hikari *sensei* said because she was the representative for the adult beginners’ class, having been asked by *sensei*. Then Noriko-san said:

I asked the students if they had questions to ask *sensei*, and if so to let me know by email. I received many questions about toe shoes, such as what they are like and when they can wear them, and so on. Overall, most students want to wear them at least once.

I was very surprised to hear that because during the interviews when I had asked the students if they wanted to wear toe shoes, most of them had said that they were not

¹² This was one of the performances that students were practising for the next stage performance.

interested in them or that they wanted to wear them one day, but not at the moment. Hikari *sensei* explained to the students how difficult it was for adult beginners to wear toe shoes. She said that even if they wore them, it would have no meaning if they could not dance beautifully; furthermore, toe shoes could hurt their feet. Asako-san said: “In the last stage performance I saw several adult beginners wearing toe shoes at another ballet studio, but they didn’t seem to dance beautifully.” Hikari *sensei* said: “If you want to wear toe shoes, you should join the intermediate class. If you do, you will understand how difficult it is to wear toe shoes.” By this she meant that the students could not wear toe shoes unless they joined the intermediate class. Later Noriko-san said to me that it was a bit unfair to mothers who had small children because it was difficult for them to take lessons even once a week (in the intermediate class students have to take a lesson at least twice a week). She said that *sensei* could let students wear toe shoes during the barre lesson. If the students held onto the bars, it would not be so dangerous.¹³ At 21:30, the *konshinkai* was over and we went back home together.

From these conversations it became clear to me that some students, and especially young students, were checking on other students’ dance abilities in order to move into the intermediate class and to wear toe shoes perhaps earlier than them. Thus, there was competition in this ballet studio in terms of ballet skill as well in order to show their dominance amongst almost all the members of the beginners’ class. But skills are not the focal point in the hierarchy to assure a better position.

¹³ In several magazines such as *Croise*, adult beginners often reported getting toe, foot or leg injuries such as sprained ankles or even broken legs due to prematurely wearing toe shoes (cf. Ashida and Sugiyama 2007: 76-79).

Analysis:

Age and marital status

The ethnography above illustrates how hierarchy / power relationships existed among the students. For example, during the barre or centre lessons, certain groups of people always occupied better positions than others. Yet, in theory, women can occupy any space they want in the studio based on *hayaimonogachi* (first come, first served). Therefore, I would now like to discuss what factors influence where students dance during the lessons.

During the centre lessons, while married middle-aged women danced at the front, the young unmarried dancers tended to stay at the back. Married middle-aged women thus had higher status than young unmarried women in the studio because dancing at the front enabled them to see themselves in the mirror more clearly than if they had been at the back. In the ballet studio the young students tried to be polite to the older students because they did not want to upset them. This age-based deference is characteristic of Japanese society. Based on Confucian ethics, older people are in general, or at least are supposed to be, respected by younger ones even in Japan's progressively neo-liberal era (Bethel 1992; Hendry 2003: 28; Kondo 1990: 169-171). I suggest that this dynamic could be seen in the ballet studio as well.

Moreover, in Japanese society unmarried women are not considered to be 'proper' adults. Several scholars point out that marriage is seen as one of the rites of passage which everyone has to go through in order to become an adult (*ichininmae*) (Iwao 1993: 60; Lebra 1984: 77). As argued in Chapter 2, during the Meiji era giving birth was the most important duty for women as brides. Indeed, under the *ie* system women were chosen by men's

families according to their family background, social status and health (Blood 1967: 4; Hendry 2003: 39). The tremendous importance placed on marriage has remained ingrained in Japanese culture, and until recently women who remained unmarried were viewed negatively or at least with suspicion. In sum, gender norms in Japanese society dictate that women are expected to marry and the pressure on them to do so is much stronger than for men (Hendry 2003: 151-181).

Indeed, there are many derogatory terms to describe unmarried women in Japanese. For example, women were expected to marry at a certain age, known as *kekkon tekireiki* (marriageable age). During the 1960s-1980s, the upper limit of *kekkon tekireiki* was 25 years of age, so unmarried women were compared with Christmas cakes; the implication being that there was “a lot of trouble getting rid of them” after the twenty-fifth (Brinton 1993: 96-7). Women who were unable to marry before 25 were called ‘*urenokori*’ (literally ‘unsold’), and huge pressure was put on them both at home and at the office to get married (Iwao 1993: 59; Ogasawara 1998). It is true that in the post-bubble era the importance of getting married for women has become less significant among young women. Such trends can be seen, for example, in people choosing to live with their parents and to marry at a later time in life (parasite singles), or simply not to marry at all (cf. Anon 2014; Dales 2005; Yamada 1999, 2007). I will elaborate on these trends in greater detail in Chapter 6. However, there is still an expectation especially among older generations that women (and men) will marry and many still believe they will not deserve full adult status until they do

so.¹⁴ This is undeniably related to the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology explained in Chapter 2. Women are still constrained by these practices.

As a result, even if some young unmarried women were skilful dancers, because of their age and marital status they were positioned behind inexperienced middle-aged women. For example, Natsuko-*chan* (25 years old) and Mika-san (in her early 30s) who joined the intermediate class, or Yoshiko-san (in her 30s) who used to be a semi-professional ballet dancer, stayed in the back despite their ability. In fact, as pointed out above, among the skilful unmarried dancers only Etsu-san (40 years old) could dance at the front. However, this appeared to be related to her mother's former studio status which seemed to trump her age and single status. Yet, despite the lone example of Etsu-san, I would argue that age and marital status were more important than individual ability in assuring a better position during the lessons.

The length of studio membership: *senpai* and *kohai* relations

Another important factor in addition to age and marital status was the duration of belonging to a particular studio. At Hikari Ballet Studio, the reason why certain women, especially inexperienced middle-aged women, were able to occupy good positions during dancing was not only related to their age and marital status, but also to how long they had belonged to the studio. For example, during the barre lesson Ryoko-san (35 years old) often danced at

¹⁴ For example, former Prime Minister Mori (2000-2001) stated in 2003 that women who do not have children do not “deserve any help from the government” because they are abandoning their biological mandate and not contributing to Japan's birth rate (<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/fd20030713pb.html>, accessed August 2012). Moreover, in 2014 a LDP politician who is 51 years old made an outlandishly sexist remark to a single female politician who is 35 years old. When she asked government to support pregnant women and working mothers, he said to her “hurry up and get married”. His remark was followed by other member of LDP saying “Can't you even bear a child?” She commented later that she felt that a childless single woman in Japan is not even considered worthy of being listened to. For a more detailed account see <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/20/tokyo-assemblywoman-sexist-abuse>, accessed July 2014.

the head of the mirror barre even if she had not remembered the steps properly, and during the centre lessons I always saw Rumiko-san (50s) dancing at the front with the experienced students dancing behind her. Both women were mothers and inexperienced dancers, but they were two of the longest-serving students at the school and this allowed them the privilege of dancing in a good position.

While in the post-bubble era individualism has been encouraged as noted above, according to several anthropologists and sociologists, in Japan new members are still positioned at the lowest level unless they have good relationships or strong connections with the highest-ranking people. As briefly explained in Chapter 3, the year of group entry is considered to be one of the most important criteria used in deciding hierarchical rank, and under this system seniors will always appear superior to newcomers (LeTendre 1994; McVeigh 1996; Ogasawara 1998; Slater 2003). In fact, many students told me during interviews that at other ballet studios they had experienced or heard of seniors always occupying prime positions during lessons. For example, Fukuyama-san, who was married and in her early 40s, told me that when she took part in the ballet classes at a local gym, she could not use the barre freely because the seniors had their own places at the barre. Seniors behaved arrogantly and newcomers were looked down upon.

The aforementioned scholars also suggest that under the seniority system the individual's abilities tend to be less important (cf. Ogasawara 1998; Slater 2003). They explain that this can be seen in the relationships between *senpai* (seniors) and *kohai* (juniors) in Japanese companies or schools. For instance, Ogasawara points out that under the seniority system even if a *kohai* is more capable at his or her job than their *senpai*, the latter will retain

higher status than the former (1998: 50). Similarly, although none of these scholars have researched hierarchal relationships in *okeikogoto*, during fieldwork those students who joined the ballet studio earlier clearly assumed higher status than even those who had better ballet skills. This explains why experienced dancers such as Yoshiko-san, who used to be a semi-professional dancer but was a newcomer to this studio, danced in the back rows during the centre lessons. Therefore, even at the Hikari Ballet Studio there was a seniority system, although many students denied it (at least in class) and were polite when speaking about other students during the interviews. Even Noriko-san, the class representative, had been ignored by the other students when she joined as a newcomer.

When I danced in the Chacott Ballet Studio I could clearly see the seniority system functioning. All of students were middle-aged beginners who had started dancing from adulthood with the exception of one young woman. When I arrived at the studio, everyone was already on the barre. When I quickly spotted an empty place I would join in the lesson without considering the hierarchy. When moving to the centre lesson, I took a place in the first row because I was confident about my dance skills as an experienced dancer. However, one time a teacher dragged me to the last row saying: “You should dance here.” I was shocked by a teacher’s impolite manner. Later I realised that seniors always occupied the best position in this ballet studio, even a young experienced woman danced behind them. For example, during barre lessons seniors danced at the mirror barre, and during the centre lessons they occupied the front row just like those in Hikari Ballet Studio. The main difference was that in the Hikari studio students demonstrated their power tacitly, dancers ‘knew’ their place, but in the Chacott Ballet Studio a teacher noticed the hierarchy among students, and enforced it, at least with this newcomer.

I suggest that through an embodied perspective in different ballet studios the teacher utilised power to discipline students' normative bodies – or enforced how the order of things ought to be (cf. Foucault 1977), in Hikari Studio the students “practised” the hierarchy ingrained in Japanese society – how the order was experienced and enacted. Clearly all students chose to practise within a shared ballet school hierarchy / framework that disciplined them rather than through a direct enforcement of authority. Therefore, although dance abilities were constantly checked against each other among younger students, in general the length of time spent at the school was an important factor alongside age and marital status in determining where dancers were positioned during the class and this information was embodied and lived. It was experiential and not discursive discipline.

***Habatsu* (cliques)**

In ballet studios *habatsu*¹⁵ are often recognised among the students, and the leaders of the *habatsu* have one of the highest ranks in the class. According to several students such as Noriko-san, Yamamoto-san and Fukuyama-san, in the Hikari Ballet Studio there used to be several *habatsu* led by women who did not like each other. Noriko-san told me the details during an interview. To paraphrase, there had been two main *habatsu*; one of the leaders was similar in age to Noriko-san. She had a strong character, and students who shared similar characteristics with her tended to belong to what Noriko called this leader's “lower-middle class group.” The other leader was, as Noriko-san noted above, the mother of Etsu-san who was older than Noriko-san. Etsu-san's mother not only had a strong character but also had bourgeois taste. Thus she attracted a similar type of middle-class student. According to Noriko-san, every student belonged to one of the *habatsu* and they barely

¹⁵ Several students, such as Noriko-san and Mika-san, used the word *habatsu* during interview, so I generally use this word in the thesis instead of using status groups or cliques.

spoke to members of the other *habatsu*.

Interestingly however, she said that after both the main leaders stopped coming to classes, the *habatsu* disappeared. The remaining students became milder and gentler, and became friends with each other. For example, Hisami-san was a nurse and had a very strong character. She used to exercise some power within the lower-middle-class *habatsu*, although she was not actually its leader. However, she became much milder and talked to everyone after the disappearance of the *habatsu*. During my fieldwork, Noriko-san was the class representative, but her lack of bossy behaviour led to a friendly atmosphere in the ballet studio.

Nakane (1973) points out that because of the vertical principle, several small *habatsu* groups are often created, each under a sub-leader. Although they look up to the same top leader, the sub-leaders themselves have almost no horizontal relationships with each other and barely communicate. Therefore, although each *habatsu* often aims for the same goal, she argues that they tend to dislike and compete with each other (1973: 126-33). *Habatsu* can be seen within many groups, such as political parties, gangs, universities or companies as well as the ballet studio. Even today in the news *habatsu arasoi* (conflicts among *habatsu*) are often reported on (Dore 1963: 207-9; Hoffmann 1981; Nagamori 2002; Rohlen 1974: 132-33). For example, the *Mainichi Newspaper* (2012) noted that the bankruptcy of Japan Airline (JAL) was caused by the Lehman shock and was due to *habatsu arasoi* over this event between the two groups in JAL who could not reach an agreement. Although it does not garner the media's attention, *habatsu arasoi* can similarly be seen in any ballet studio.

Since the *habatsu* were no longer present (although the legacy of the earlier system was still working for Etsu-san to some degree), in the beginners' class at the Hikari Ballet Studio, the combination of age, marital status and membership length were clearly important elements in assuring good positions during the lessons in order to demonstrate dominance in the studio hierarchy. Thus while it is true that women could choose to act more freely in the ballet studio, they still chose to work within the constraints of the Japanese hierarchal system. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that middle-aged women found having a seniority system to be advantageous for them in retaining and asserting their social status compared to a focus on physical ability alone. On the other hand, young students aspired to express themselves through ballet skills, but they negotiated this expression within the existing framework. For the present and in sum, the women chose these practices to parallel hierarchies, with the obvious exception of gender, in Japanese society, a point revisited in the conclusion of this chapter.

Dancing ability

Although an individual's abilities were regarded as less important than other factors described, ability also played a certain role in determining a student's dominance or position in the hierarchy at the ballet class. For example, Noriko-san's ballet skills helped her to be of a higher rank in the hierarchy than her social status would normally allow. Social status was not a necessary factor in deciding rank at the Hikari ballet studio unlike the case of the mothers in chapter 3. However, since ballet was embedded in other middle-class practices and positions, in general middle-class people had more power than lower status people at the ballet studio.

Noriko-san did not belong to the studio's middle-aged and elderly women's group, which represented middle-class status, and this seemed to be related to her different tastes and lifestyle. To offer some concrete examples, Noriko-san had not gone to university, and her husband worked at Duskin (a home cleaning company).¹⁶ Moreover, she had continued to work until the age of 60. These factors made her different from, and less middle-class, than other middle-aged women at the studio. The majority of them had studied at higher education institutes and stayed at home as professional housewives in order to support their husbands who worked at jobs such as accountants or civil servants. As noted in the previous chapter, the relative rank of housewives is often determined by their educational and occupational backgrounds and / or their husbands' occupational position. Therefore, Noriko-san was distinguished from the majority of the studio's middle-aged women who had solidly middle-class's tastes and lifestyle. She actually had better relationships and seemed more comfortable with the younger dancers.

However, Noriko-san was seen as a leader by the other students and was even chosen as the class representative by the *sensei* despite her lower social status. This was, of course, largely related to all the factors discussed above; her higher age (60), marital status (married) and her long membership at the studio (eight years). However, it was her dance skills and *sensei*'s reliance on her that were the deciding factor in determining her rank. She was one of the best dancers in the beginners' class. She was particularly strong at remembering the dance steps, and once the practice for the stage performance had started, many students asked Noriko-san for help. Hikari *sensei* had noticed that many students relied on Noriko-san's dance skills, and thus gave her the position of class representative.

¹⁶ For a more detailed, see www.duskin.co.jp, accessed in March 2013.

As a result, the other students showed respect for her which in turn led to her having a higher rank than her actual social status within broader Japanese society might have afforded her. Although an individual's ability is generally less important in deciding their hierarchical rank, in Noriko's case her ballet skills helped her to move up in the hierarchy.

Moreover, although the students barely talked about other students or their dancing at the ballet studio, students were checking their ballet skills against each other, asking whether or not some of the better dancers might transfer to intermediate class. This was because, as noted above, adult beginners could not wear toe shoes without joining the intermediate class (which were held at least twice a week). It was particularly important for young students to wear toe shoes because wearing toe shoes could let students rise within the hierarchy despite age or social rank; wearing toes shoes requires mastering difficult skills and the nature of the symbolic capital of wearing the shoes meant many students desired to wear them.

Indeed, many beginners including middle-aged women were keen to wear toe shoes, but found it difficult to do so. Some mothers who had small children or middle-aged women who were burdened with caring for elders (discussed further in Chapter 6) were too busy to move up a level in order to wear toe shoes. Others felt a lack of confidence about their ballet skills. By contrast, the young unmarried students were more skilled and could afford to join intermediate class in order to wear toe shoes. Therefore, although individual ability was not a common factor in deciding one's dominance or position in the ballet hierarchy, since most of them had low status as young unmarried students, they wished to show their superior dancing ability compared with other students by wearing toe shoes earlier than

them.

Indeed, my unmarried informants not only had low status inside studio but also outside. As noted above, the majority of them were *OLs* who worked monotonous and routine jobs. As noted in Chapter 2, in 1990s becoming an *OL* was attractive for unmarried women because they could make money and have the free time to represent themselves through the consumption of goods or leisure despite the boring features of their jobs. According to Ogasawara (1998), free time also assisted them in finding marriage partners within the companies they worked for. Women usually worked for a big corporation and quit these essentially dead end jobs before getting too old to find a partner. Moreover, Ogasawara argues that although being an *OL* is seen as a position of powerlessness, they actually control men at workplace. For example, if male employees fail to maintain good relationships with *OLs*, they may risk losing their careers because they are assessed as having a lack of social capital or managerial ability (1998: 155-158).

However, as mentioned in the previous chapter in the post-bubble era people have tended to get married with people of similar social standing, educational background and job status. Moreover, although the number is relatively few if compared to males, there are an increasing number of women in career track positions. According to Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, in 2011 the percentage of women on the career-track was 11.5% compared to 2.2% in 2001.¹⁷ The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training describes in their survey that in 2011 nearly 60% of career-track women found self-satisfaction

¹⁷ For a more detailed of female career-track, see <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/list/dl/71-24b.pdf>, accessed August 2014.

through their jobs, and 52.5% of them felt their jobs were worthwhile (*yarigai*). Unlike *OLs*' simple work or indirect power relations, career-track women can feel in control and often have a positive sense of identity through their jobs.¹⁸ Therefore, becoming an *OL* has become a less attractive option if compared with this job title in previous eras. Miura and Ueno argue that in the post-bubble era doing *okeikogoto* was a space where unmarried non-carrier women could feel confident about themselves because they could not do so through marriage or in the workplace (2010: 129). Indeed, my unmarried informants were absorbed in dancing ballet. Therefore, I will conclude that for young women dancing ballet and donning toes shoes meant that they could display their individualism as well as feeling (and expressing) an attractive and confident feminine self compared with other unmarried *OLs*.

However, as noted above, women were required to negotiate this expression of an individualised self even in the ballet studio. Rosenberger argues that young unmarried women have a dilemma in choosing either to have traditional views of “selflessness, interdependence with the group, and sensitivity to others” or a more globalised and neoliberal view of “self-centred[ness] that has been both encouraged and damned” (2013: 23-24). Therefore, while young dancers were more skilled, and tried to be recognised by wearing toe shoes, they danced at the back during the lessons following the middle-aged women's seniority system. In other words, they chose to express themselves within the ballet hierarchy although middle-aged women do take advantage through the hierarchy, and the system continues to exist in parallel with broader Japanese social changes.

Conclusion

During interviews many students told me that there was no hierarchy or *habatsu* at the

¹⁸ For a more detailed, see <http://www.jil.go.jp/mm/siryo/pdf/200006094.pdf>, accessed August 2014.

Hikari Ballet Studio. Indeed, there was no obvious competition among the students. For example, although some students always occupied a good position during the lessons most students were willing to give up their position if someone else had already occupied their favourite position. According to the Hikari students with experience in other studios, this was very unusual. Students at the Hikari Ballet Studio appeared to be less competitive than those in other ballet studios. However, when I examined where students danced during the lessons, I realised that there were clearly certain hierarchies and power dynamics at work. Prestige and position did not follow individual abilities.

Although the ideal of individuality has been reinforced by the government and neoliberal institutions in the post bubble era, in Japanese society issues unrelated to ability have often continue to be considered important, such as the birth year, year of entering the company or educational background, in order to decide rank in a hierarchy. Similarly, although dance skills were constantly compared among the young beginners, in general at the Hikari Ballet Studio, dancers determined their dominance or position using criteria unrelated to ballet, such as age, marital status and the length of time at the studio. This was partly because unlike in domestic, workplace or social hierarchies, middle-aged women could aim for the top of the hierarchy in the ballet studio even if they were unskilled dancers.

Ballet is an overwhelmingly female-only activity with very few men. Dominant and subordinate positioning, at least in the direct context of the studio or lesson, is not a gendered affair. Few men are involved directly, though wives' status position vis-à-vis their spouse, or lack thereof, is an important factor. Nevertheless, several middle-aged women's selfish behaviour such as vying for the best position can be analysed as a rebellion against

middle-class ideology because they were expected to care about others in their daily lives. I posit that middle-aged women chose hierarchal practices at the ballet studio in parallel with the everyday structure of Japanese society in order to demonstrate their dominance. However, they were also trying to oppose to their more constricted lives outside the studio within patriarchal Japanese society.

On the other hand, young students who found it difficult to aim for the top within the ballet hierarchy kept comparing their dance abilities with others and expressed their eagerness to wear toe shoes. Indeed, wearing toe shoes was regarded as a symbol of social and cultural capital. I argue that they tried to show off by wearing toe shoes earlier than other students because it was an *akogare* (desirable) for most students, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

The body and *akogare*; Women who express themselves through dancing ballet

During fieldwork in 2007, as well as attending a number of ballet classes and schools, I went to a local gym in Oimachi.¹ I did this in order to investigate what exercise practices were popular in Tokyo. I found that there were many dance classes being held at the gym, such as jazz, hula, belly dancing, hip hop and ballet, along with yoga and tai-chi. I exercised there at various times between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on weekdays. From the morning onwards it was mainly middle-aged women participating and I began to wonder why they were so passionate about training their bodies. One possible reason would of course be to attain a healthy body. Public health is being pushed by the Japanese government as part of a 'modern lifestyle'. Japanese people are encouraged to enjoy both leisure and work as consumption practices (Spielvogel 2003: 22). But long before the current political administration, making healthy bodies through exercise, for example military-style gymnastics in schools (cf. Nomura 1990) or radio exercises (*rajio taisō*) (cf. Kuroda 1999) were encouraged by the government from the Meiji period onwards.² As previously explained, issues related to healthy food and exercise have been widespread in the media since the 1990s, when the government first sought to increase leisure time. The same health aims could equally apply to the women dancing ballet at the Hikari Ballet Studios, but

¹ Ōimachi is located in the *shitamachi* area of Tokyo, the traditional downtown lower middle-class area.

² According to Kuroda (1999) and Nomura (1990), in 1920s both military *taisō* (military-style gymnastics) and *rajio taisō* were promoted in Japan by the Ministry of Education and Culture in order to improve physical strength, and both have been practised through to today. For more details of military *taisō* see 'the history of western body' section in Chapter 3 of this monograph.

during their interviews they offered more complex reasons as to why they had begun to dance ballet.

Therefore, the first theme of this chapter links to previous chapters by relating what women expect to achieve through dancing ballet in terms of their bodies. In Chapter 3, one of the main reasons mothers gave for taking their children to ballet classes centred on providing their daughters with physical capital through ballet. For example, some mothers hoped their daughters would achieve particular physical attributes such as ‘good’ proportions through ballet because they believed it would confer social status upon their daughters as well as better enabling them to *distinguish* themselves from other middle-class mothers within all middle-class society (see Bourdieu 1984). Much like these mothers, mature female dancers tried to attain slim, beautiful and healthy bodies which could then be used as physical capital.

However in contrast to this focus on status through bodily aesthetics, the majority of adult women were more interested in the bodily practices of self-cultivation or coming to know oneself rather than being primarily interested in issues related to class. In what follows I particularly apply Csordas’ “somatic modes of attention” (1993) to understand my informants’ claims of knowing or cultivating oneself. Csordas argues that individual behaviours are informed culturally and socially. I claim that these mature women felt that they had neglected their own bodies and subjugated their own desires before beginning to dance. I will therefore discuss how these women were able to assert agency after cultivating themselves through ballet. I suggest that women often chose to dance ballet over doing other embodied activities for a particular reason. For most of them, ballet was a form of

akogare in terms of forming ballerinas' bodies or living out childhood aspirations related to western aesthetics. Therefore, the second theme of this chapter considers how women have embodied their individual desires or dreams through bodily practices of ballet. This chapter concludes by highlighting how ballet has provided a space for women to enjoy a sense of self-focus through becoming idealised selves because ballet represents a fantasy or dream world where they did not need to follow society's expected gender roles.

Ethnography Part 1: The Body

Ballerina proportions

During interviews five young women told me that they wished to develop ballerina-type proportions through dancing ballet. I probed further asking them what exactly this meant. Hirata-san, who was in her 30s, said: "I wish to change my proportions (*taikei*) through ballet. I want to make places that should be slim as slim as possible (*Hosoku narubeki tokoroha hosokushitai*)." Shino-san, also in her 30s, said: "I want to have a ballerina's body type (*barei taikai*). When I tell people that I'm learning ballet, I want them to say, 'I see, that's why you have these kinds of proportions'." The flip side of this is that other young women had more specific ideas regarding their desired proportions, namely slenderness, or what they considered to be a beautiful body line or delicate appearance to be obtained through ballet dancing. As mentioned in Chapter 3, after the shift from wearing kimonos to western clothes people started caring more about their body proportions, and as a result, being 'unwrapped' and thin have come to be seen as important to feminine beauty.

An ethnographic example of this was when the Hikari ballet studio started its classes. The adult beginners' class was called "*otona no tame no shape up*" (adult beginner's class for getting in shape). This name in itself attracted some young students; in fact, Hirata-san

(30s) told me that because of the name of the class they started dancing ballet with the expectation of losing weight. Ryoko-san (35) also told me: “I thought that ballet was good for losing weight. I dance ballet in order to maintain my body proportions.” I said that she looked slim enough to me, but she told me:

I currently breastfeed my baby eight times a day so I lost weight easily after giving birth. However, as I plan to stop breastfeeding shortly, I am worried about putting on weight and thought that ballet would be useful in keeping my figure. I am interested in how ballet will work on my body, rather than in ballet itself. I like to think that the stretches and movements needed in ballet will reduce the excess body fat I feel I am carrying.

Sachiko-*chan*, a 29-year-old woman, said: “Achieving *biyō mokuteki* (beauty aims) was important in my decision to start dancing ballet. Losing weight is one of these aims, along with having a beautiful body line.” Shino-san even said that she could tell who was an experienced dancer by looking at their neck or shoulder line.

Others seemed fascinated by the delicate appearance of ballet dancers’ bodies because they thought they themselves had developed a muscular body type through playing sports. For example, during our interview Umehara-san (38) said, “If I had chosen ballet rather than basketball when young, I could have developed a delicate (*kyasha*) appearance.” Yukako-san also said: “I used to enjoy a variety of sports such as swimming, working-out and volleyball. But, I ended up building very visible outer muscles on my body. In order to build muscles in the right places such as developing my inner muscles, I started dancing ballet.”

Spielvogel states that the majority of young Japanese women do not want to add weight and muscle to their bodies because a muscular frame or fat are both seen as undesirable, inappropriate or even incorrect for an ideal female body type. Such views are not only those of men but also of women themselves. Indeed, according to her, one very pragmatic way to see these norms at work is through the very limited range of sizes in clothes (2003: 171-9). Moreover, as pointed out in Chapter 3, the elegant body type represents the ideal middle-class body, which is in contrast to the working-class's heavy and muscular body (cf. Bourdieu 1984; Wacquant 2004). It is important for professional ballerinas³ to remain slim, housing an 'etherealized' body because it is a standard requirement for them in order to acquire and retain their jobs (cf. Stokes 1983: 246). As a result, ballerinas often suffer from eating disorders such as anorexia (Daly 1987; Gordon 1983; Kirkland 1986). Ballet in the modern era has become ingrained with images of slimness and delicateness (See Chapter 1). Therefore, through seeing ballerinas' bodies my informants believed that dancing ballet was one way to achieve an attractive middle-class feminine body by emulating practices presumed to create the idealized ballerina's body.

Several young women had more unrealistic wishes. Some even hoped to develop a smaller face! For example, an ideal figure for Mika-san, in her early 30s, involved having a flat stomach, small face and thin legs. Yuko-san said, "I want to have a thin neck and narrow hips. I think this is reflective of a ballerina's body." 35-year-old Ryoko-san also said, "People who have been dancing ballet for a long time seem to have a certain type of body, such as a small face and upright posture. They look cute (*kawaii*) and I want to be one of

³ My focus on ballerinas is not only because I research female amateur dancers, but also because female professional dancers are often asked to be thinner than male dancers for aesthetic reasons and to meet directors' or audiences' expectations.

them through dancing ballet.”

Although it was difficult to attain a particular body, some students even declared that their bodies had started changing after dancing ballet. For example, four young students surprisingly said that they had become taller as a result of dancing ballet! Fukuyama-san said, “Since I have made an effort to pull my body upwards, I have become taller.” Similarly, Hirata-san said she had gained 5mm in height, and Ryoko-san even said that she had become 1.5cm taller than before. Two other students also claimed that their necks had become longer. According to Mika-san, “...because I have tried to make my neck longer during ballet lessons, it has lengthened.” The students saw these body changes as positive because they thought that their new shapes were closer to a ballerina’s type of body; their body was thus a symbol, indeed an embodiment, of an idealised (middle-class) body.

Of course it is impossible to achieve certain body characteristics, such as a small face or long legs, simply through dancing ballet. However, much like the above mentioned case of desiring slim bodies, from looking at ballet dancers’ bodies as a model these young women wished, or even believed, that they could obtain such a body through dancing. Yet, unlike a slim body which people may achieve through their own efforts, a ballet dancer’s body style is not developed principally by their training; on the contrary, only people who naturally have this particular type of body are allowed to enter the top ballet schools in order to become professional dancers. For example, in Russia and France, amongst the many talented applicants, only girls who have a specific ballerina body type, such as long limbs and a small face, can pass the entrance exams for famous professional ballet schools.

Although the physical requirements for applicants are barely described in their websites,⁴ documentary films such as one about Vaganova Ballet Academy titled *52 Percent* (2007) or another about the Paris Opera Ballet School titled *L'ecole de Ballet* (1987) clearly show schools' bodily demands for candidates. The Vaganova Ballet Academy only considers students whose legs comprise 52% of their body length. Similarly, a dean of the Paris Opera Ballet Company said in the film that only applicants whose head comprises one eighth of their height can pass the entrance exam. In Japan, a staff member of the Japanese Ballet Association (its details are outlined in Chapter 2) told me during interviews that there were no professional ballet schools in Japan, and so with only two exceptions, there were no entrance exams for children to enter ballet schools.⁵ However, since there are exams for budding professionals in their teenage years, professional Japanese dancers also tend to have 'proper' ballet proportions although as noted previously body proportions are not strictly enforced by sets of codes and rules as in other countries but are the result of the self-regulatory function of Japanese ballet's image of the dancer's body.

In sum, younger women's impossible aspirations were a result of contemporary accessibility to learning ballet at an amateur level, regardless of age, class and proportions (see Chapter 2). In fact, it was not common for adults to learn ballet until recently, thus some older students said that they had never thought about learning ballet before because they had believed that only people who had a specific ballet dancer's type of body could

⁴ The Paris Opera Ballet School website (<https://www.operadeparis.fr/en/les-artistes/l-ecole-de-danse>) at least shows the minimum and maximum height and weight depending on applicants' age. For example, an eight year old candidate should not be taller than 1m 35cm or heavier than 25 kg, but the Vaganova Ballet Academy offers no such clear description (<http://vaganovaacademy.com/B/ApplicationAndTuition/Application>), accessed September 2014.

⁵ Only the K Ballet Company (<http://www.k-ballet.co.jp>) and the *Kyoto Ballet Senmon Gakko* (Academie de Ballet de Kyoto) (<http://www.kyoto-ballet-academy.com>) require an entrance exam for children (at six years old), accessed December 2008.

learn ballet. For example, 60-year-old Noriko-san said: “I had never envisaged that I would be suitable or able to learn ballet because I believed that ballet was only for people who are thin, tall, have a small face and a flexible body.” Increasingly however, through the contemporary path of consumption, young women actively cultivate their bodies with the aspiration to gain an ideal ballerina-type of body. More to the point, their attention to their body was affected by social expectations of what a proper feminine body should be, a point to which I will return in my discussion of the mind-body connection.

Health: Changes in the body's condition

In the case of older students, improving their health or body's condition through dancing ballet was their main concern rather than their appearance. Several middle-aged women claimed that they had developed stronger legs or bodies after dancing ballet. For example Kubo-san, who was in her 70s, said:

I started ballroom dancing twenty years ago and my teacher kept telling me I have to have stronger legs in order to improve my ballroom dance technique. I therefore started dancing ballet a few years ago and as a result my legs strengthened. In fact, I had recently injured my legs but was able to recover earlier than my doctor had predicted. I am convinced it was due to ballet.

Kazuko-san, a 57-year-old married woman, started ballroom dancing along with ballet three years before our interview, because she could barely walk at the time. She said:

I developed leukaemia eight years ago and had a bone marrow operation. The operation itself was successful, but since I was in hospital for a year I could not walk, even on flat ground. A relative advised me to take up ballroom dancing in order to

regain my strength and sense of stability. She also advised me to start dancing ballet to help me walk gracefully. I tell you now that my legs have become stronger and I can walk smoothly. When I started ballroom dancing I could barely dance while wearing 2cm high heels, but now I dance wearing 7.5cm heels and can even wear high-heeled shoes in my daily life!

Ikeno-san, in her 40s, also said that she had developed a stronger body through ballet.

I started to dance in my late 30s but before this I had suffered from anaemia and used to have to lie down, like a *netakiri-shufu* (a sleeping housewife), even without having done anything physically demanding. For instance, during the summer I often became tired (*natsubate*) and lay in bed for hours every day for several months. Even if I tried to do the washing-up after a meal I often could not finish it, since I felt tired halfway through. However, after I started taking tablets (CoQ₁₀),⁶ I felt motivated to do something and began to dance ballet. In the beginning, even during the floor exercises, I felt exhausted and could not stand up for the next exercises. However, now I have more physical strength and dance twice a week. I even go to the gym two or three times a week.

Other middle-aged students told me that they continued dancing ballet because their body condition had improved a lot. For example, Emi-san, a 50-year-old housewife, told me: “I suffered terrible backaches and used to go to see a physiotherapist twice a week before I started dancing ballet. Now I have cured my problems completely and even wear high-heeled shoes. This was impossible before.”

⁶ CoQ₁₀ (Coenzyme Q₁₀) supplements are believed to give energy.

Lock argues that middle-aged women in Japan are expected to look after their bodies in order to take care of elderly family members (1993: 57, 1996: 75). However, the dancing women at the Hikari ballet studio were not developing their particular body type as a part of the aforementioned *ryōsai kenbo* ideology but for themselves. Their concerns about their body's condition were triggered more by their interest in self-cultivation following the recent health booms in Japan, as explained at the beginning of this chapter. Indeed, according to Leisure White Paper in 2012, respondents who cared about their health increased from 40.2% (1972) to 53.4 (2012).⁷ In particular, being healthy is of particular concern for the middle-aged and elderly. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare documents that in 2011 55 percent of people aged between 50 and 69 described themselves as healthy and of those 55 percent, 19 percent did exercise and 17.8 percent claimed to care about their diet in order to keep healthy.⁸ For According to the *Nikkei* newspaper, as of 2013 exclusive food shops such as Seijō Ishii are largely supported by wealthy elderly customers and the number of shops is increasing because they have clearly come to care more about the quality of food compared to younger generations.⁹ Going to the gym has also seen a recent boom amongst elderly women. According to Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2012), women over 60 went to the gym most often (53.9%) followed distantly by men within the same age category (15.9%) and women between 35 and 59 (11.1%).¹⁰ Indeed, the Leisure White Paper (2012) clearly indicates that the elderly more than the young (and women more so than men) care about their health. According to a

⁷ <http://activity.jpc-net.jp/detail/srv/activity001355/attached.pdf>, accessed December 2014.

⁸ For a more detailed account see <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/judan/chukou12/index.html>, accessed September 2014

⁹ These exclusive food shops are 20 to 30% more expensive than ordinary supermarket. For a more detailed account see <http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNZO58433140T10C13A8TJ1000>, accessed September 2014.

¹⁰ For a more detailed see <http://www.meti.go.jp/statistics/toppage/report/bunseki/pdf/h24/h4a1303j2.pdf>, accessed December 2014.

survey held by a Japanese advertising agency, Hakuhodo, many women in their 40s to 60s not only want to maintain their health (88.5 percent), but also strive to improve it in order to enjoy their life (83.5 percent).¹¹ Similarly, my middle-aged and elderly informants cultivated a healthy body for self-satisfaction rather than expectation of family or the state.

In sum, while young students cultivated their bodies to gain an idealised ballerina-type of self / body image; middle-aged women enjoyed improving their body's condition in terms of health benefits and their impact on being an "active self". In fact, Sachiko-*chan* (29) said that she thought that the popularity of ballet among women was related to their pursuit of beauty and health (*biyō to kenkō*). Both young and older women enjoyed cultivating their bodies for only themselves through dancing ballet. It was difficult for them to aspire to become their idealised self in their daily life since they conformed to expected gender roles, a point to which I return in the mind-body connection section of this chapter. At present the key point is that the bodily practice of self-cultivation and knowing oneself affected and influenced the notion of lived bodies and mind among dancing women. During interviews many students happily told me how they had started (re)-cognising their own body (*karada-de-wakaru*) and self as a result of starting ballet lessons.

Understanding one's own body (*Karada-de -wakaru*)

At first I could not understand what was meant by the phrase *karada-de-wakaru*. Because I started ballet when I was four-years-old, I barely remember the feeling of first understanding my own body. In sum, it could be said that ballet movements have long been an essential part of my *habitus*. Thus such physical movements were so engrained in my

¹¹ This survey was titled 'healthy ambitions for new elderly generation (*atarashii otonasedai no ishiki chōsa*)'. For a more detailed see http://www.hakuhodo.co.jp/uploads/2012/05/20120531_2.pdf, accessed December 2014

daily life that it was difficult to step back from this experience, in essence, to imagine an undisciplined ballet body. However, in contrast, most of my interlocutors were beginners, and therefore were more aware, even painfully aware, of their own bodies through bodily movements and natural limits. Although some students had previously done sports or other forms of dance, they claimed to understand their own bodies more through ballet, which provided a different experience for them. For example, Yamamoto-san (40s) said that she started understanding how her body's inner muscles were structured. Natsuko-*chan* (25) also said that she was getting to know how to use her body and muscles through ballet. Both of them said that their understanding of their own bodies was related to the *sensei*'s teaching method. Natsuko-*chan* explained this further:

During the lesson *sensei* shows the students how to use their body (*karadano tsukaikata*), so I start understanding my own body. *Sensei* sees it as important for the students to understand their own bodies. When the students get to know their body and feel delight in it, *sensei* shares this happiness with the students. As a result, every student is engrossed in ballet and now many have found their own way of taking lessons.

In fact, Noriko-san said that once she had started understanding her own body under the *sensei*'s guidance, she began thinking that she wanted to know her body more. As a result, she is now captivated by ballet. When I interviewed the *sensei*, she said:

I try to explain the movements to the adult students in various ways because every student has a different way of understanding. Adults cannot move their bodies freely, so I try to explain the ballet movements through anatomical terms (*kaibōgaku*). When

I was in London I used to go to Pilates lessons taught by Alan Herdman,¹² so I understand anatomy to some degree.

In fact, when I attended her lessons, *sensei* used specific examples to explain to the students how to move their bodies or muscles. For instance, in order to pose in the right ballet posture, she asked students to stand as if their belly and back had become one. However, despite *sensei*'s good instructions, in the beginning most students seemed to struggle with how to handle their own bodies. This, I contend is because before dancing ballet there was a detachment between mind and body. Or, put another way, their bodies did not seem to belong to them.

A Mind-body connection: an awareness of the self

Umehara-san (38) told me that at the beginning she could not move her body as *sensei* wished her to.

When we practise the *relevé* (the raising of the body on to the points or demi-pointes),¹³ *sensei* often advises us to pose as if someone was pulling us upwards using strings attached to the ceiling. However, even if I understood *sensei*'s advice in my mind, it was abstract (*chūshōteki*) for me and I could not express it through my body movements. However, after practice and experience, I now understand my own body and can move following *sensei*'s instructions. *Sensei*'s advice is now very concrete (*gutaiteki*) for me.

Mika-san in her 30s told me a similar story. Apparently she previously had not been able to

¹² He is a well-known Pilates teacher in England, because he established the first Pilates studio there (<http://www.alanherdmanpilates.co.uk>, accessed March 2009).

¹³ <http://www.abt.org/education/dictionary/index.html>, accessed November 2007.

dance in the right position because she could not correct her body by herself.

When I dance, I used to have the bad habit of positioning my hips pointing backwards (*koshiga hiketeru*). I was advised by *sensei* to correct it, and understood her advice in my head, but did not know how to do it through my body. However, I now understand my body much better, so most of the time I can correct my bad habits by myself. For example, during dancing I think, “I am dancing in a bad way now, so I must dance in the correct way.” I feel happy when I understand through my body what *sensei* says. This is something I could not do before (*sensei ni iwarete yoku wakaranakatta kotoga karadade wakkatatoki ureshii*).

Csordas argues that somatic attention includes “attention to” and “attention with” the bodies of self and others (1993: 138). In extending the arguments of Merleau-Ponty’s ‘lived bodies’ (1962) detailed in Chapter 1, Csordas considers the embodied states between subject and object to be “intersubjective being” (1993: 139). Hence, he explains that dance (along with making love or playing team sports) is as an example of paying attention to body of others while being or attending with one’s self (ibid.: 139-149). Through somatic attention, namely their own practice, the teacher’s instruction, and dancing with other students, the young students incorporated bodily being and intersubjective being. In other words, not only through their own movement but through interaction with others, they could embody knowledge (enact the process of self-reflection), and solve the problem of perceiving themselves as only being bodily objects (or alternatively disembodied states). Hence, *sensei*’s explanations were no longer abstract for them, and the young students claimed that they understood their own body and were better able to control or think through their bodies. In this regard, several anthropologists influenced by Merleau-Ponty

point out the importance of gaining bodily knowledge through the phenomenological engagement of learning by doing (cf. Ingold 2000; Jackson 2013; Stoller 1997). Jackson, for example, explains that through imitating the everyday embodied practice of others such as making a cooking fire in the Australian Outback, his body achieved being-in-the world and became aware of the “intelligence of the techniques” (2013: 69-70). Therefore, dance scholars often note how dancers gain sensory engagement from visual and verbal learning along with an embodied and affective mimesis (cf. Sklar 2000: 72); or from the process of moving from “sedimented” to “indwelling” (cf. Parviainen : 2002: 21).

In fact, my informants learnt through similar phenomenological engagements; awareness of their bodies and others, and bodily knowledge accrued through these kinaesthetic experiences. As a result, fifteen of my informants claimed that their mind and body were now connected to each other through embodied practice and the embodied memory of movements, in sum through somatic attention. This connection seemed to especially help older students not only to be aware of their own bodies, but also to develop a sense of self and identity. For example, Noriko-san in her 60s pointed out:

Through dancing ballet I developed a strong core not only in my body but also in my mind. Now I can make decisions very easily even in my daily life. I become less emotional than before, and realise what is important in my life. My mental state improves every time I go to ballet class. I feel that my body and mind work in close cooperation (*Kokoro to karada-ha hyōri-ittai*).

Similarly, seven students told me that ballet had helped them to improve their mental condition and better deal with stress or depression. For example, Kajimoto-san, 57, also

said that ballet made her less stressed, and so she came to the lesson every week even if she felt tired. In fact, during the previous year she missed the lesson only once. Rumiko-san also said: “Through ballet I can clean up things which I pooled in my mind. My body and mind are cleansed and purified [through dancing ballet] (*Shinshin tomoni jyōka sareru*).” As pointed out in the previous chapter, in the Japanese context the word ‘clean’ refers not only to hygiene but also to moral values. Since ballet studio life was highly ritualised, Rumiko-san’s comment supports a religious-like perspective. Ohnuki-Tierny explains this link between ritual and pseudo-religiosity with the example of a Japanese pianist, Nakamura Hiroko. Nakamura felt ‘clean’ when she played the piano for her teacher, and she used the word ‘clean’ to describe feeling marvellous (1984a: 34). In the case of Rumiko-san, ballet helped align the spirit with body.

Interestingly, some younger students portrayed their new relationship to mind and body through the metaphor of conversation; that is to say, they could communicate with their body through ballet. For example, Natsuko-*chan* said: “I can have a conversation with my bones and muscles now. So, I can move my body bit-by-bit” (*Hone ya kinniku to kaiwa-ga dekiruyō ni natta. Karadawo hitotsu hitotsu ugokaseru*). Similarly, Fukuyama-san, a 40-year-old bank employee, said:

I talk to my body (*karadato taiwa suru*) during the lessons. I ask my body, “*Kyō-wa dō?*” (How are you today?), and I can easily understand not only my body but also my mental condition. I do not like talking to people very much compared to reading and writing, but when I dance I can express myself through my body. It is easier for me to express myself through my body rather than through speaking. Before learning

ballet I felt uncomfortable and stressed when talking to people in the office. But, once I had my own place in the ballet class it made me feel that I do not need to assert myself too much in the office, and I can happily play a supporting role there. I just talk to people when I need to. In the ballet class everyone is interested in ballet, so I feel relaxed and can talk to classmates comfortably. If I had not begun to dance ballet, I would not be able to express myself now and might still feel dissatisfied with my life.

Jackson argues that “Music and movement often take the form of oppositional practices that eclipse speech and nullify the divisions that dominate everyday life” (2013: 67). Similarly, in Fukuyama-san’s case, ballet helped her to find her own place to represent her subjectivity or sense of identity because she could not only “talk of” but also “talk from” her body (Farnell 1994: 934). I suggest that ballet has provided the opportunity for dancing women to exist beyond expected gender roles, even if outside the studio these gendered expectations remain. Ballet, it could be said, is an escape *into* the self. In fact, many students at the ballet studio told me that *after* starting ballet they began to understand and pay attention to their own bodies and self, implying that many students had neglected their bodies *before* dancing ballet in Japan’s patriarchal society. Not only drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, but akin to Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*, Csordas considers that individual behaviours are unconsciously informed both culturally and socially (1993: 138).

Indeed, through this learning process my informants found that their bodies were culturally objectified outside studio and expected to perform roles in society, for example the culturally tantamount expectation of being mothers or wives (discussed in Chapter 2). I

argued in Chapter 1 that through the process of modernisation the Japanese body has been transformed from an autonomous subject to a passive object; a disciplined ideological subject. The process of modernisation brought with it a transformation in hitherto prevailing Japanese attitudes towards the body. As an example of such a shift one might consider that until the westernisation of Japan during the Meiji Era, public bathing was mixed-sex and people also often wore kimono in a way that left them semi-naked. However, influenced by and responding to western ideas, showing the naked body in public came to be seen as a sign of primitiveness. As a result the government banned public nudity in order to create a modern civilised country and although people still enjoy bathing together to some degree, public nudity has been considered shameful among the Japanese since then (Kondo 1999: 231). According to Nomura, before the ban on public nakedness in 1872, nudity had not directly been related to sexuality for most Japanese although oddly the geisha's covered body (layers of kimono, layers of paint) represented a sort of sexuality. However, he states that after the covering of the body and the influence of Christianity, nudity itself acquired a new meaning as a symbol of sexuality (1990: 259-62).

Another example arose during the American Occupation following World War II when striptease shows flourished all over Japan (Miller 2006: 80). The sexualised female body now became highly commodified and currently can be seen in various media outlets such as television, film, *manga*, animation and especially in men's magazines. For example, Allison states that in *ero manga* (erotic comic stories) the female body is used as a sexual object by men in order to express their maleness. Such *ero manga* appear in weekly male magazines (1994: 188-190, 1996a: 51-78), and during the 1980s I often saw *salarymen* reading them on public transportation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, since the Meiji Era women have been

expected to be good wives and wise mothers – taking responsibility for child rearing, managing the household and caring for elders – and these roles and obligations are still considered to be female responsibilities. Even in the workplace women are often expected to support their male bosses or colleagues to some degree. In contemporary Japanese society, female bodies are subject to ideology (Allison 1991; Althusser 1971) and the disciplinary power of institutions (Foucault 1977; Frühstück 2003), so individual bodies are subordinated to others, such as men, husbands, bosses, children and elders as *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977). In other words, before they began ballet the dancing women's bodies were passive and they felt constrained by social norms, and, I contend that this is one of the reasons why dancing women found it so difficult to subjectify their own objectified bodies before dancing ballet.

Many feminists analyse female bodies by drawing on Foucault's theory (precisely his concept of docile bodies, 1977) because they think that his approach to the body explains how women's bodies are transformed into disciplined and subservient bodies, where even women's perceptions of their own bodies are framed by social norms and discourses. Women often aim to develop a certain body type, such as one that is sexy, slim and youthful, partly because of the male desire for such a female body. However, women's bodies are not merely objects for the male gaze or topics for social discourse; women themselves also try to acquire these bodies as a result of self-surveillance. Indeed, many feminists argue that women's bodies exist within the interaction between social forces on the bodies and women's reaction to those forces (Bordo 2003; Gatens 1992; McNay 1992). For example, Bordo (2003) has analysed anorexia as a result of both female obedience to socio-cultural demands and a form of self control over a one's body.

Similarly, in the cases that I have presented, although these women noticed social constraints, my young informants still worked on creating socially acceptable or expected feminine bodies through dancing ballet. These women pointed out that they felt happy to be able to control their own bodies following the teacher's instruction, to know how their bodies were structured, and to be able to communicate with their bodies. In other words, young women treated their body as a commodity, which was manageable for own satisfaction. As argued in Chapter 1, in late capitalist society the individual body is utilised as a commodity, especially by middle-class women to assert self-identity through dieting, cosmetics, exercise and body modification because the body has become a medium of pleasure, confidence and self-expression (cf. Featherstone 1991; Shilling 1993; Turner 1984). Similarly, some Japanese, have recently become keen to display or manage their bodies through working out, going to a beauty salon or even having plastic surgery for purely hedonistic reasons (cf. Miller 2006; Spielvogel 2003). Although my informants were not interested in these 'beautifications', young dancing women cultivated the self with the aspiration of embodying and displaying their ideal (*akogare*) bodies and selves as a form of self-fulfilment or to build self-confidence.

On the other hand, this was not the case for the majority of middle-aged women. Along with the cultivation of their bodies for their health, they cared more about knowing their bodies and self, rather than being overly concerned with how their body was perceived by others (although they paid attention to others' bodies as a form of intersubjective or somatic attention). Indeed, many of these students pointed out that they had become aware of their own bodies and of their selves in tandem. For the elderly women dancing ballet itself was their childhood *akogare* (discussed below), so they were not particularly aiming for gaining

physical attributes such as good proportions or a delicate appearance unlike the younger women. I have argued throughout this thesis that in daily life both these young and middle-aged women have few opportunities to think about themselves, and therefore ballet provided a special space for them where they can concentrate, and become their *akogare* self through embodying attractive appearance (for young women) and achieving a childhood dream (for older women), a topic which I explore in the *akogare* section below.

Part 2: *Akogare* for ballet

Among mature women it was clear that the feeling of *akogare* for ballet stemmed from not only seeing ballerinas' bodies but also from their childhood dreams, western cultural influence and ballet's cute image, or an individual combination of these elements. Therefore, in this section I examine how these women could achieve their own subjectivity, or bring to fruition their dreams in the present through their bodily practices.

Childhood dreams: learning ballet and wearing toes shoes

Many middle-aged women, and some in their late 30s, said that due to the media's influence, learning ballet had been their *akogare* since they were children. For instance, Mayuko-san (early 40s) and Umehara-san (38) said that when they were little they dreamed of dancing ballet after reading the ballet manga *Swan* or watching ballet soap operas, such as *Akai kutsu* (see Chapter 2). Ikeno-san (late 40s) said:

When I was a child, I loved to read ballet *manga*, especially *Barei-boshi* and *Kāsan-boshi*, which appeared in *gakushū-shi* (educational magazines) for elementary school

students.¹⁴ It was popular for girls to read ballet *manga* in the Showa 40s (1965-74).

For example, in *gakushū-shi* every year new ballet *manga* stories appeared.

In fact when these women were children, during the late 1950s to early 1970s, most stories in girls' *manga* were about ballet. As mentioned in Chapter 2, during this era ballet was promoted by the Japanese media. As a result the popularity of ballet increased among ordinary Japanese girls. In spite of their wish to dance, however, there were not many studios, particularly outside Tokyo, so they could not study ballet. For example, Ryoko-san (35), Mayuko-san and Ikeno-san, who grew up in Osaka, Aomori and Niigata respectively, mentioned that when they were little, nobody studied ballet and there were no ballet classes near them. They said that learning ballet was an activity that was not familiar to them at all.

Moreover, many middle-aged and elderly students said that when they were young lesson fees were still high, so only upper-middle class people could afford to learn ballet. This is partly because when these women, now in their forties and sixties were young girls or teenagers, Japan was in its period of rapid economic growth and there were still significant economic differences among the Japanese. As explained in Chapter 2, taking ballet classes was considered a privileged activity until the recession in the 1990s. For example, Ikeno-san said: "I wanted to learn ballet when I was small, but since both of my parents were working, they did not have the time and money to take me to a ballet studio (*yoyū ga nakatta*).” During these years middle-class wives usually stayed at home as professional housewives, as mentioned in Chapter 2, so by mentioning that both her parents were working we can assume that Ikeno-san's family background was lower than middle-class.

¹⁴ These *manga* appeared in the *gakushūshi*, namely *shōgakusei* published by Shōgakkan between 1968 and 1971. The author for both *manga* is Yukiko Tani. (<http://kiritani.vis.ne.jp/comic/tani-yukiko/list.html>, accessed July 2008).

Similarly, Umehara-san said: “When I was small, I believed that only special people (*erabareta hito*) could learn ballet.”

For the older generation, learning ballet was an extremely posh activity. For example, 60-year-old Noriko-san said: “When I was a child, my family was not rich enough to take me to any *okeikogoto*, including ballet. It was unusual for children to be able to go to *okeikogoto* in those days.” Haru-san, 63, also said: “When I learned ballet in my childhood there were no private ballet studios but only ballet schools belonging to famous ballet companies. Learning ballet was an upper-class hobby and there were few people who studied it. When I was in elementary school, nobody in my class studied ballet.” Even the heroines of ballet *manga* or the television ballet soap operas of this era were usually teenage girls from wealthy families aiming to be professional dancers. It could be said that the status of these women improved after marriage and the contemporary accessibility to learning ballet at the amateur level has enabled their youthful dreams to come true at a later age.

Another interesting index of *akogare* can be seen in the desire for, even obsession with, toe shoes. Middle-aged women who longed to dance ballet also commented that wearing toe shoes was another childhood dream, so as to be more like the ballerinas in *manga* or other media. For example Ikeno-san, who used to enjoy reading *manga* during her childhood, said “At school, every girl tried to look like the ballerinas from the *manga* by standing on their tip-toes in ordinary shoes (*zukku*).¹⁵ I often drew ballerinas wearing toe shoes –

¹⁵ The word *zukku* is considered to have originally come from *doek/dock* (shoes, in Dutch). The word appeared in the Meiji era, although young people barely use it any more.

everyone just *akogare-ta* (longed for) toe shoes.”

Toe shoes were a symbol of ballet writ large for Ikeno-san; in fact, as mentioned in Chapter 4, many women in Hikari ballet studio showed an interest in wearing them. They admired these shoes and were eager to wear them. Several mentioned that other students had even moved to another ballet studio in order to wear toe shoes. For example, Mayuko-san (40s) told me a story about a student named Maruyama-san who was eager to wear toe shoes. Once she found out that it is not easy to wear toe shoes at Hikari she moved to another ballet studio to wear them. According to Mayuko-san, Maruyama-san had even bought toe shoes before obtaining permission to wear them from *sensei*. Maruyama-san had said to her “I cannot wear toe shoes yet, but it makes me happy to just look at them.” In the case of Yamamoto-san (40s), she secretly joined the toe shoes lessons at another studio while registering at Hikari ballet studio.¹⁶ She said:

I thought that I would never be able to wear toe shoes in my life, but I could finally wear the longed for toe shoes (*akogareno tōshūzu*) two years ago. Whenever I wear toe shoes, I gaze at them in rapture. I feel something special when wearing them (*nanka yappari hakutabini uttori. Hakuto kibun ga chigau*). In the beginning, my toes were too painful to wear them and I was not even sure if I could stand up wearing them. Now I understand how ballerinas are superhuman beings. It is even amazing to see that ballerinas can walk wearing toe shoes. But, I did not realise it until I wore toe shoes. I was surprised to know the inner world of ballet (*balle no okubukasa wo issō*

¹⁶ Students at Hikari were not particularly banned from joining another ballet studio. In fact, several students such as Sachiko-*chan* were dancing at other studios, but they hesitated to say this overtly. According to Noriko-san, when her former teacher found out that she was dancing at another venue, she was kicked out of the first studio. Students at Hikari were plausibly afraid of the same thing happening to them.

kanjiru).

For middle-aged women, learning ballet and wearing toe shoes represented both symbolic and cultural capital because this was the dream of many middle-class girls when they were young during Japan's era of rapid economic growth. Moreover, some women outside the studio who are in the same generation still cannot access these products of *akogare* aesthetic. In particular, wearing those shoes was regarded as most *akogare* because of its requirement of embodying difficult skills and aesthetics (the shoes represented particular embodied attainments; the difficult skill set and required physique to dance ballet). For example, when I went to see a stage performance by another ballet studio, many adult beginners were clearly struggling with their toe shoes. Their knees were bent, their toes were not fully extended, and they also could not maintain a straight posture whilst dancing in toe shoes. In general, they were in no way ready to wear toe shoes, so their movements were lacking in flexibility and it looked as if a troupe of marionettes were dancing. Therefore, while for young students wearing toe shoes was a tool to rise within the hierarchy of the ballet studio (discussed in Chapter 4), for middle-aged women it was a symbol of their *akogare*. Through dancing ballet and wearing toe shoes, they embodied an idealized aesthetic and felt as if they become elegant and special women.

Ballet as western culture and aesthetics

The middle-aged women referred to above consider ballet to also be ingrained in western culture, aesthetics and arts. Many students said that they liked ballet because of its use of classical music. For example, Fukuyama-san, a 40-year-old said that she was not interested in any other exercise, even though some seemed good for her health, such as yoga or aerobics, simply because she did not like the music used in the classes. Similarly, other

women pointed out they had not chosen hula or Jazz dance because they did not like the music. Listening to classical music is regarded as a form of high cultural capital along with going to the theatre (cf. Bourdieu 1984) and in Japan it is also embedded within the context of western high art (cf. Linhart 2009). However, as with dance, people react to music emotionally and the affective register of such experiences is seen as embodied experience (cf. Ingold 2000; Massumi 2002). Therefore, ballet students perhaps felt as though they were engaging with western highbrow aesthetics through engaging in dance augmented by the high cultural capital of classical music.

Indeed, Ikeno-san, who had two daughters, was absorbed in European hobbies including classical music and ballet because she really longed for western culture:

I like literature, music and dance which are related to European culture. While studying European literature at Niigata University, I joined the orchestra club as a violinist. I do not like any music apart from classical music, and this is partly related to why I have chosen to dance ballet. I also like *shugei* (embroidery) and have continued sewing since childhood. I make *shugei* dresses for bisque dolls. Making bisque dolls is another hobby of mine, which I have been doing for the past ten years. I even fire the dolls in a kiln by myself. On the whole, it can be said that I am from the generation of the 'foreign craze' (*gaikoku kabure*). I am from the generation who long for foreign countries. I long for European culture such as music or ballet and so on.

As Ikeno-san pointed out, she had romanticised western culture and this affected her choice of hobbies. She had a particular romantic image of the West that fuelled her *akogare* for its

culture. Several scholars argue that middle-class Japanese women see the West as “progressive”, “sophisticated” or as having “status” (Kelsky 1996: 35; Moeran 1995: 118; Mori 1996; Rosenberger 1992a: 107).¹⁷ Moreover, Goldstein-Gidoni and Daliot-Bul state that the West represents “a dream world” for Japanese women (2002: 65-8). It is the imaginary and the Other place where women can be away from gender roles. Similarly, through embodying western cultural products, dancing women wished to attain or maintain status, and perhaps to escape from daily burdens at home as wives or mothers.

In fact, this gender liberation was one reason why many middle-aged women chose ballet rather than ballroom dancing. Not surprisingly some middle-aged women told me that they had tried ballroom dancing before starting ballet because it is also a romantic western dance. Two of them still continued to study it along with ballet. However, most had not continued with ballroom dancing because the classes required partners and they felt uncomfortable practising. For example Rumiko-san, in her 50s, said: “I switched to ballet after practising ballroom dancing for a year. I did not like dancing with strangers, although I might have enjoyed it if I could have danced with handsome young men.” Yoshino-san said: “I could not find partners easily because of my height (164cm tall).” Ikeno-san also did not seem to have a high opinion of ballroom dancing in Japan. She pointed out:

I have concerns about partners in ballroom dancing. I would want to do it if my partner was a British man [during the interview she knew I was a PhD student, but did not know that I belonged to a British University]. At the gym, the ballroom dance

¹⁷ On the other hand, some middle-class women see Japanese tradition as important in order to provide a sense of stability and harmony to their house (Rosenberger 1992a: 117-125) or in order to maintain “Japanese identity” (Mori 1996: 120-122).

lessons had just started and I joined in the last time, but most of the students were *nenpai* (middle-aged or elderly). It was different from my image of ballroom dance and I do not want to practise ballroom dancing in such a situation.

Many dancing women complained of dancing with strangers, implying that they did not want to dance with Japanese middle-aged men. Interestingly however, these women said that they would not mind dancing with a British partner, or with a handsome young man. Women do not want to practise a western style of elegant dance with middle-aged Japanese men because these men do not represent the romantic western world but rather remind them of their own proscribed role in a rigidly gendered society.

By contrast, in order to dance ballet women do not need partners. According to my informants, ballet is almost exclusively a female-only activity, so they do need to care about men. Though in any society women are the majority in ballet classes, in Japan there is an exceptionally strong gender division (cf. Martinez 1998: 7). Henderson and Bialeschki (1987) argue that women-only groups provide their participants with a sense of freedom, because there are no men around to constrain them in their leisure activities as they might do in their daily lives. Similarly, women were dominant in the Japanese ballet studio. Although there were two male students in the class during my fieldwork, they were expected to adhere to a sort of feminine code. If male students showed any ego or selfishness, inappropriate behaviour or sexual interest towards the women in class, as they might do in their other daily settings, they were immediately shunned by the women. Dancing thus provided my informants with a female space, a sense of freedom and a venue for the expression of their agency within the broader structure of socio-cultural constraints.

Therefore, during interviews many middle-aged women pointed out that the most attractive aspect of ballet was that they could concentrate on themselves. As noted in the section one of this chapter, in daily lessons middle-aged women were enjoying a sense of self-focus through bodily practice. These women said that they did not want to bother others while dancing. Yukako-san, who was in her early 40s, said: “In ballet I only think about myself. Everything is related to ‘my’ self and this is what attracted me.” The students’ *akogare* is not only for ballet or toe shoes but also found in dancing for themselves.

Young dancing women also found that ballet liberated them from their expected gender roles. My young informants worked as *OLs* or caring for small children, thus they also felt constrained by older gender norms at work or home like older students (discussed further in the next chapter). However, younger women were regarded as less constrained by hegemonic gender ideals as compared to older generations partly because, as noted in the previous chapter, they are enabled even encouraged to express individualism in Japan’s current neoliberal era. Therefore, young informants negotiated with social norms to express their individualised self (such as cultivate their appearance) through dancing ballet from a hedonistic perspective, and they tried to *display* confidence in the self rather than just a *focus on* self in order to feel gender liberation through ballet. For example, similar to older students, young women said that they preferred ballet to other types of dance. However this was not because of its western aesthetics, but due to its perceived cuteness.

Ryoko-san (35) said that she disliked most other types of dance because she could not get into the rhythm, but enjoyed dancing ballet under the same circumstances because she finds it cuter than other forms. Building on this point of view, Sachiko-*chan* (29) said that she did

not like other types of dance such as jazz, aerobics or hip hop because she preferred cute things to the cool image (*kakkoii*) held by some other dances, music and outfits. Indeed, young students' preference for cute styles of dance prevented them from practising other styles of dance despite their interest.

'Cute culture' emerged as part of youth culture among female teenagers in the early 1970s (i.e. Hello Kitty), and the notion still prevails among young women even now (cf. Kinsella 1995; McVeigh 2000). According to these scholars, cuteness involves not only prettiness or a childlike attitude but can also be a rebellion against adulthood and the taking-on of responsibility. In particular, cute fashions among young people can be interpreted as a "rebellion or refusal to cooperate with established social values and realities" (Kinsella 1995: 243). Indeed, young dancing women in the studio were wearing cute leotards, and it seemed associated with a resistance against contemporary patriarchal society. For example Sachiko-*chan* said that she preferred cute leotards to *kakkoii* ones for their colour and design. For example, she especially liked leotards with attached skirts, although only a few people wore leotards with designs. She had blue, pink and black coloured leotards and pink and black, rainbow coloured knitted shorts, which she wore over the leotards. She said she often ordered ballet outfits from a ballet shop catalogue, *Milba*¹⁸ because she thought she could look at them much more carefully rather than going to the shops.

Mika-san, who was in her early 30s, was well-known for wearing cute leotards in every lesson. When I asked the students about their leotards, many told me that Mika-san was the most fashionable student in the class. She said she bought most of her leotards from an

¹⁸ <http://www.milba.com>, accessed December 2007.

online shop, *Ballet ya san*,¹⁹ which mainly offered imported apparel. She liked the cute designs and pastel colours, and had seven different leotards which were blue, black, grey, green, white and pink in colour. For Mika-san, wearing cute leotards was part of the joy of dancing ballet. Mika-san said, however, she tried not to be overly cute because she is in her 30s. Indeed, although these women are categorised as young adults (detailed in Chapter 4), it is generally not considered appropriate for women around 30s to wear cute outfits in public (cf. Miura and Ueno 2010). In their everyday life they were expected to be less glamorous, thus in the closed context of the ballet studio young women showed their rebellion against expected gender roles through wearing cute leotards, and tried to express themselves without restriction.

In sum, while the older generation tended to escape from hegemonic gender ideals and concentrate on themselves through dancing ballet, young students attempted to display confidence in the self or subvert the dominant gender discourses. The perspectives towards ballet depending on generations were also represented in what they expected through the stage performance. For example, middle-aged women barely mentioned to me that they liked to be on the stage for the performance. In fact, during interviews the majority of middle-aged women told me that they felt embarrassed to dance on stage. For example, Kajimoto-san, 57, told me she had never been on stage because she was reluctant to show her dancing to anyone. Abe-san in her 60s also told me during an interview: “I have never invited my friends and colleagues to the stage performances because I think that I am not good enough to show my dancing to them although they wanted to see it.” As noted above in the section of “Health”, the number of older women who cultivate bodies for self-

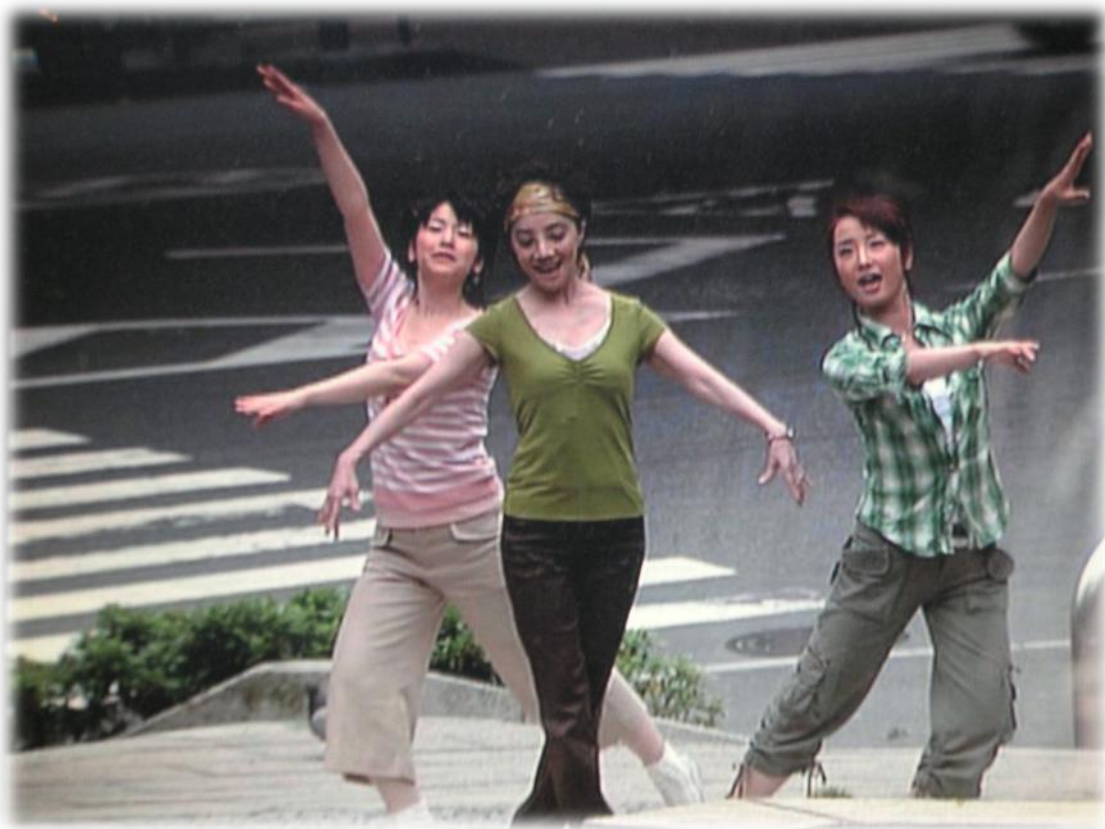
¹⁹ For a more detail account, see <http://homepage3.nifty.com/ballet-yasan>, accessed November 2007.

satisfaction rather than for the expectations of the state are increasing. However, as Spielvogel (2003) points out, any open admission of moving bodies as a mode of self-expression might result in older women being labelled *wagamama*. In particular, dancers in the stage performance are paid attention to by audiences, thus it is not surprising that my older informants were reluctant to dance in public.

Other informants told me that they tended to use practice for the stage performance to improve their ballet technique. For example, Rumiko-san in her 50s said; “practice for the stage performance are different from the usual lessons. Since *sensei* teaches us performance steps seriously, I practise more seriously than usual. I am so impressed (*kandōsuru*) by *sensei* since she tries to improve my dance skills.” Although they were hesitant to be on the actual stage, during fieldwork I observed that middle-aged women were very keen to practise for the stage performances. For example, after lessons, they often learned steps from Noriko-san in the changing room since, as mentioned in Chapter 4, she best remembered the steps. When they needed more space, they danced on the floor again. Since most beginner students had difficulty remembering the steps, students always asked Noriko-san about the steps. Also, Kazuko-san was a middle-aged woman who would video record the dancing during the rehearsals for the stage performance in class. She always set the video camera in the corner of the studio and copies of the video were passed around amongst the students. They said that they could memorise the steps at home by watching.

In general, middle-aged women tried to practise the steps wherever they could and I saw them practising steps in the street several times. For example, one day, after a rehearsal, the students walked back to the station together and on the way Abe-san asked Noriko-san

about one of the steps for the stage performance which we had practised that day. She said that she always took the step on the wrong leg in the waltz after the arabesque. Noriko-san said that she needed to change the leg quickly after the arabesque. Noriko-san and Abe-san started dancing in the street and others followed them. Kazuko-san even got off her bicycle and joined us. People in the street stared or laughed at us for dancing. Kazuko-san said: “*Watashitachi-tte ayashii dantaiyone*” (We must be seen as a very strange group). As noted in Chapter 2, the ballet soap opera, *Primadam*, has a similar scene where the students start practising the steps for the stage performance in the street.



Photograph 5: Practicing steps outside for the stage performance (from a scene of soap opera, *Primadam*).

So, practice for the stage performance was a serious affair, and although they were reluctant

to be on the actual stage, older women considered the practice as another opportunity to cultivate their bodies and self. Indeed, middle-aged women were not as interested in how they were perceived by others. Through engaging in a western high aesthetic practice, female-only, childhood dream activity, these middle-aged women enjoyed spending time on only themselves engaging in self-cultivation.

By contrast, young students showed great passion towards the stage performance. Many of them said during our interviews that they enjoyed the performance because they felt as if they became different persons through wearing beautiful stage dress and make-up. For example Ohata-san (36), said: “I really like the stage performance because dancing on the stage, wearing heavy stage make-up and beautiful ballet costumes takes me to a different world.” Sachiko-*chan* had never performed on stage, and said: “I really want to because I fancy wearing a stage costume, particularly a tutu and ballet make-up. The stage performance was one of the reasons for me to start dancing. I want to dance on stage wearing a ballet dress and make-up, looking and feeling like a different person.” Shino-san, a hospital receptionist, made similar comments:

I love the stage performance! And I have performed over ten times in five years. It is because I am shy but like to be paid attention to (*hikkomijian-no-medachigariya*). I love ballet make-up, and stage dress in particular, because it is like *kosu-pure* (costume play). Wearing dresses, tiaras and garlands make me feel like a princess.



Photograph 6: Adult beginners in Hikari Ballet Studio wearing ‘romantic’ tutus for the stage performance (taken by a professional photographer employed by the Hikari Ballet Studio).

According to my informants, wearing stage dresses and makeup played an important role in helping them to become ‘different’ and ‘special’ people. Butler’s later notion of performativity (1993) suggests that gender is a reinforced appropriate act. That is to say, one ‘does’ or ‘performs’ a gender, as discussed in Chapter 1 and there is, simply, no real perfection of a gender role. However, in the stage performance young students performed or attempted to display their idealised (*akogare*) roles or express the self that they wanted to be in their daily life through wearing dresses and makeup. Unlike older students who were afraid of being labelled *wagamama* through being self-focused on the stage or in public in general, young women enjoyed being paid attention by audiences. Because of neo-liberal

perspectives, younger generations were less concerned about being against dominant gender ideals compared to older informants at least on the stage.

Moreover, unlike the case of Europe, ballet does not belong to any entrenched Japanese centred tradition.²⁰ Certainly, in Europe it is far more unusual for adult beginners to dance ballet on the stage, let alone wear toe shoes, compared to Japan (Sasagawa and Ikeda 2002). A comparison can be made with another common borrowing from Western aesthetics. Goldstein-Gidoni, in relation to western style weddings in Japan, argues that Japanese celebrate them differently than westerners do: “Inventing the Western is much easier than doing the same with the traditional-Japanese since there is no ‘real’ past to limit the Western customs dreamed up. Thus, there was no necessity to investigate the continuity with the past in this instance” (1997: 140).

Similarly, young informants utilised stage performance to display an ideal self. Goldstein-Gidoni argues that western wedding dresses appear as luxurious symbols of “high status cosmopolitanism” to Japanese women (1997: 134). As noted above, for Japanese women the ‘West’ represents a dream world, thus my young informants pointed out that in stage dress they felt like a quintessential western princess, as well as a different, perhaps more confident person. Indeed, several dancing women such as Natsuko-*chan* and Yuko-san described tutu or frilled stage dresses as ‘cute’, which I propose is a form of rebellion. Women who performed marginal roles in daily life tried to find and display their idealised self through wearing cute dresses and ‘heavy’ stage makeup.

²⁰ Also see the section ‘Contextualizing ballet in Japan’ in Chapter 2.

Indeed, several of my informants described ballet makeup as heavy perhaps because it requires wearing greasepaint (pancake) on their face, neck and shoulders. It is followed by nose and eye shadow, eyeliners (upper and lower), false eyelashes, mascara and colourful lipstick.



Photograph 7: A book explaining how to do ballet makeup in Japanese (Shimizu and Morishita 1988: 113).

Some scholars argue that the heavy makeup *geisha*, *kabuki*, *takarazuka* performers or even the styling of Japanese brides help the ‘performers’ play and the ‘audiences’ believe their roles because in such makeup performers’ real faces are covered up and unrecognisable (Dalby 1983; Ernst 1974; Goldstein-Gidoni 1997; Ishihara 1993; Itoh 2003; Robertson

1998; Stickland 2007). In the case of kabuki, even within the same story actors change their makeup many times depending on their roles (Itoh 2003). In other words, heavy makeup works like a mask, which, for example, Noh actors use to disguise/distinguish differing roles (cf. Miura 2004; Nishino 2012).²¹ Thus in this east meets west cultural context it is not surprising that my dancing informants felt like different persons wearing stage makeup. As an aside, when my friends came to see my ballet performance when I was a child, they often became silent in front of me because they did not see me as the same person.

As introduced in Chapter 2, contemporary middle-class women put on ‘light’ white makeup with foundation as a confirmation of their femininity as compared to tanned working-class women. Ashikari argues that these women are expected to do this as ideal women within a framework of gender ideology conforming to social expectations, especially of men. Thus, their make-up is not intended to emphasise individual beauty (2003: 13). Indeed, wearing heavy makeup has long been regarded as being against the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology (Ashikari 2003; Speilvogel 2003: 146). According to these scholars, during the Meiji era (1867-1912) only geisha were allowed to wear heavy makeup, and during the Taisho period (1912-1926) only bar hostess and dancers wore heavy make-up which mimicked the style of western actresses. Therefore, wearing stage make-up, along with theatrical dress, made dancing women feel different from their everyday ‘plain’ role of subservient workers.

Young women actively used the stage performance to display their idealised selves. For example, during an interview Shino-san described wearing stage dresses and makeup like

²¹ According to Miura (2004) and Nishino (2012), in Noh plays, only *shite* (main actors) usually wear masks, and *waki* (supporting actors) are not required to wear them. There are twenty-four different types of masks, and some including female masks can represent several emotions such as sadness or happiness in the same mask depending on the angle from which it is seen.

kosu-pure. This is a form of youth culture that has been popular in Japan since the 1990s (Tanaka 2009: 25).²² In *kosu-pure*, people aim to completely disguise their identity by embodying a role through dress and action such as an animation character. Scholars such as Grimes (1975) or Ware (2007) argue that during Halloween or Mardi Gas costumes and masks not only emphasise disguised roles but conceal the wearers' identity. Similarly, in *kosu-pure* performers can conceal their social status like those in Halloween or Mardi Gas. As a result, like the case of cute outfits several Japanese scholars and novelists argue that *kosu-pure* can be analysed as rebellion against social norms by young people who refuse to perform their expected roles in real society (Narumi 2009; Sugiura 2008; Tanaka 2009). In particular, these scholars highlight that young women enjoy *kosu-pure* as a mode of becoming a more attractive self, not particularly aimed at attracting men, but to appeal more broadly in society. By displaying themselves as desirable women, even to other women, they wish to assert themselves and seek success in Japan's competitive society. Similarly, young dancing women were satisfied with becoming a "gorgeous and elegant" self on the stage by wearing special clothing and makeup, and perhaps believing that they were admired by audience members consisting of both men and women. Ballet provided young women with an opportunity both to improve their appearance during daily lessons and then to display an ideal confident version of themselves outside the studio in the stage performance.

Conclusion

According to Spielvogel, many Japanese women go to the gym hoping to "escape from the demands of office and home" and an expectation of "entertainment, relaxation, and passive

²² According to BBC website, *kosu-pure* is also getting popular among Londoners who are seeking friends or fun. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-28297077>, accessed September 2014.

weight loss” (2003: 142). Similarly, when I asked the women at the ballet studios about why they had started dancing, they were very keen to cite work or domestic problems as their reasons for starting ballet. This is a topic I discuss in the next chapter. However, they were also hoping to develop a certain body type, such as particular proportions, attainable or not, and a healthy body. Some even made rather amazing claims such as gains in height due to ballet practice. These women also had started understanding their own bodies and self as a result of embodied praxis. This illustrates that they felt that their bodies seemed somehow separate from them before taking up ballet. In part I have suggested that this is because the female body is the object of the male or social gaze. Through ballet practice and consumption these women were not only aware of their bodies, but also acquired a stronger sense of self.

Indeed, dancing women embodied an *akogare*(ised) self-cultivated in ballet exercises. Ballet represented ‘a dream world’ for Japanese women; the teachers and almost all the students were women. They practised with classical music, and some wore ‘cute’ leotards. Thus ballet provided these women with a perfect longed-for western world, as well as with opportunities for asserting their individual identity. Goldstein-Gidoni argues that enjoying entertainment, clothing, and their bodies ends when women in Japan marry. This is why the wedding is presented “as the peak of the girl’s life” (1997: 118). However, through the daily lessons or stage performance women, regardless of their age, can enjoy the ‘peak’ as many times as they want. Ballet was a special place for women to feel liberated from the restrictions of society; a space where their *akogare* can come true in a socially acceptable fashion. However, as noted above, students had different views of *akogare* depending on their generation; while young women cultivated their appearance and wished to be the

centre of attention and self-display, older students hoped to enjoy a sense of self-focus through ballet. I shall explore this inter-generational difference with relation to the changing notions of gender in Japan in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Dances with Agency: Social expectation, social constraints, and women dancing for themselves

In the previous chapter I argued that dancing women developed an enhanced sense of self through their embodied experience. Ballet emerged as an attractive hobby to take up for these women because it allowed them to gain a sense of freedom, and to romanticise about themselves through self-focus or self-display. Linked to the previous chapter, this chapter continues to provide case studies of dancing women who desire to assert their identity through ballet. However this chapter is more focused on women's narratives and less on dancing as a process; that is to say in what follows the focus is on how they felt about expected gender norms in their lives, and how exactly ballet helped them feel empowerment or liberation. Since I compiled far too many case studies to recount in total, here I highlight common features from the narratives I collected, which can be categorised as representing women's three different life stages: unmarried young women working in general track employment, young and middle-aged married women as professional housewives, and career oriented full-time working mothers.

In general, several sociologists who have focused on Japan suggest that compared to older generations, young people place less emphasis on the importance of the traditional domestic division of labour at the core of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology (cf. Ehara 2004; Shirahase 2005). For example, the *Nikkei* newspaper recently published an article

discussing a male nursery school teacher who was told by his fiancé not to worry about his low income because she would continue working after marriage (*Nikkei Shinbun* 21/02/2014).¹ Moreover, another article discusses a husband in his 30s who left his job temporarily and moved to the UK with his wife in order to support her during her research at the University of Oxford (*Nikkei Shinbun* 19/09/2014).² Indeed, a governmental survey showed that the idea of the ‘traditional’ domestic division of labour was supported by only 20% of the young generation (people in their 20s) compared to their older counterparts (in their 60s) at a rate of nearly double the young (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office 2013).³

Therefore, in this chapter I begin with a general discussion of contemporary changes in attitude towards gender supported by recent research. Then, I examine how this shift has affected inter-generational differences that exist in my field site regarding how ballet is differently envisioned and utilised amongst my informants. I recount, based on interviews, how women in the different stages of life mentioned above discussed their problems at work and their role in motherhood, and how these issues related to their choice of ballet as a hobby.

Inter-generational change in Japanese gender ideas and ideals

As noted in Chapter 2, women from older generations continue to conform to traditional

¹ For more detail about their marriage, see online *Nikkei Shinbun*

http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASGG1402U_V10C14A2SHA000, accessed January 2014.

² For more detail about him doing household, see online *Nikkei Shinbun*

http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXLASDG1604E_W4A910C1MM8000, accessed January 2014.

³ According to their website, the Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office is aiming for women and men to have equal status and opportunities in Japanese politics, economics, society and culture. Their survey focuses on gender viewpoints in terms of jobs, households, childrearing and elder care among men and women. For more detail see http://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/whitepaper/h25/zentai/html/zuhyo/zuhyo01-00-25.html, accessed November 2014.

gender roles such as *ryōsai kenbo*. In particular, they are expected by family or husbands to be hardworking and *gamansuru* (endure) or show selfless devotion to their children. Indeed, motherhood used to be considered a part of women's innate nature in Japanese society. Even if women did not learn anything about motherhood, from texts for example, they were believed to be able to give unconditional love to their children (Iwao 1993:128; Lebra 1984: 196). In sum, mothers were expected to devote themselves to their children without question. For example, watching her children grow up was considered to be a mother's joy and it was presumed that women were willing to be selfless or to sacrifice themselves in order to experience this joy (Iwao 1993: 128-9; Ohinata 1995: 200-4).

As noted above, compared to their older counterparts young generations take a different perspective about gender norms and appear less constrained by older gender norms. While the spread of individualism among young people is recognised through such indices as an increase in the number of irregular workers regardless of gender (see chapter 4), many scholars point out that changing notions of gender in Japan are more obvious amongst women than men. This, for example, is demonstrated through their respective attitudes towards education. Today more women than men go on to higher education (cf. Shirahase 2005). A similar tendency can be seen in occupations, as some women continue working full-time even after getting married or having children, although the number of women who do so remains relatively small (cf. Aoshima 2007; Takeishi 2006; Yasukōchi 2008). Moreover, such trends can be seen in marriage, for example people getting married at a later time in life (parasite singles), or having a marriage with no children, or simply not getting married at all (cf. Aoshima 2007; Dales 2005; Yamada 1999, 2007). Although the government or media encourage young people to be independent, they often are alarmist in

regard to unmarried young women's consumerist oriented hedonistic lifestyle as expressed through their enjoyment of shopping or hobbies. This is because, according to several scholars, these pursuits are seen to be a cause for delaying marriage, and so, low fertility (cf. Nakano and Wagatsuma 2004; 138-140; Sakai 2003; Ueno and Nobuta 2011). Indeed, the birth rate has been progressively dropping since the 1990s, and in 2012 it fell to 1.41% (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2012).⁴ Currently young mothers are also accused of being self-oriented in terms of consumption (cf. Goldstein-Gidoni 2012: 176; Sasagawa 2004:184). The majority of the aforementioned scholars conclude that young women's changing attitudes towards gender lead to a desire to show their freedom and empowerment (as a form of individuality perhaps) compared to older generations, but young women are still required to conform to older gender norms to some degree.

Thus all of my informants including the young ones in the ballet studio were not free from older gender norms. Yet, these Japanese women dancers were not one homogeneous group. All held different gender ideas and ideals depending on their age and stage of life. For instance among young dancers, the unmarried ones frequently revealed a hedonistic perspective on life, but housewives were usually in more of a 'liminal' stage between post-bubble ideas of individuality and older gender norms. On the other hand, older generations felt strongly constrained by 'traditional' gender norms yet they endured them. In this ethnographic chapter, therefore, I examine how this inter-generational difference towards gender norms (and sense of self) appeared depending on the stage of life among dancing women at the Hikari Ballet Studio.

⁴ For a more detailed explanation of low-birth rate, see <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/wp/hakusyo/kousei/13/dl/1-02-3.pdf>, accessed January 2015.

Ethnography

During my fieldwork, young unmarried women happily told me about their ideal body type, their sense of self and their views in regard to the stage performance as noted in the previous chapter. However, in terms of gender roles such as expected jobs or marriage expectations, unmarried women were reluctant to tell me about their life history or ambitions. On the other hand, middle-aged married women were not eager to tell me about bodily issues, but they eagerly shared tales of their problems at home. This discrepancy might be related to the fact that I was the same status as the young unmarried women, thus they perhaps felt competitive or even threatened by me, as noted in Chapter 1. In the case of middle-aged women, they were both married and older than me, so as noted in Chapter 4, their position in the Japanese hierarchy of social relations was clearly higher than mine. As a result, they seemed more comfortable telling me their life histories – although they might have sometimes just had more time to talk to me than the young women who were busy with work. Also, as noted in Chapter 5, women in their 50s or 60s, are part of a generation that is infused with a sense of *akogare* for western culture, so they were more interested in my studies or life in London. This helped me to have good relationships and to conduct in-depth interviews with older women more easily.

Young Unmarried Women: Absorbed with *jibun* (self)

There were four unmarried women in their 20s and 30s, and four in their early 40s practising at Hikari ballet studio. While six unmarried women were working at non-career-track jobs, two worked as *haken shain* (temporary workers). In general, as I have argued, young generations tend to focus more on their individuality when compared to their older counterparts. Some show their empowerment not only through their consumption choices

but also through their career decisions. However, despite the fact that in general there are now more career-track women compared to the pre-bubble era (see Chapter 4), in the ballet studio none of the unmarried women were in a responsible position at their workplace. In this sense, they are apparently continuing to reproduce subordinated ‘traditional’ gender roles in their places of work. Yet, this does not mean that they gave up showing their individuality as young women. Therefore, in this section I examine how dancing ballet was related to their subordinate employment status and their notions about gender roles. I have chosen to focus on three women here, *à la* Weber’s “Ideal Types”, because their comments represent the sort of arguments made by other unmarried students I interviewed.

General track (Office Ladies)

Mika-san, who was in her early 30s, had worked at a steel company for nine years as an office worker. Although she had graduated from university, she worked in the general track because she had not received an offer to work an executive track job. She said:

In the beginning I was willing to transfer to the executive track at a later date, but once I realised how difficult this would be I thought “*sokomade shinakutemo*” (I do not need to force myself [make such an effort] to do it). The best part of my job is that I can do it easily by myself. On the other hand, there are too many routine tasks and not enough work that requires me to think for myself. I am more interested in talking to people than just doing deskwork. I have thought about changing my job before, but since I do not have any special skills and do not know what kind of job I really want, I have gradually come round to thinking ‘*sokomade shinakutemo*’. It may sound conservative but since my company is big and well-known, my parents are happy for me to keep working there.

Indeed, it is not common for assistant level employees to be upgraded to a higher status. For example, the Ministry of Health, and Welfare stated in 2011 that despite the existence of a system whereby cooperation which transferred employees from the general track to the executive track, only 8.8% had been transferred.⁵ Thus, Mika-san sounded as if she had accepted her supportive role when she said *shikataganai* (nothing could be done) (cf. Mathews 1996; also see Chapter 1). “However,” she continued explaining, “it might seem paradoxical given what I said to you before, but if I can, I want to have a job in which I can use my English language skills.” She had studied English literature at university and continued to study at an English language school. Since she had taken the *kyoshoku-katei* (a teacher-training course) during her undergraduate degree, if she were to pass the teachers’ examination she could become an English teacher at junior or senior high school level. She said: “I want to become an English teacher or work in a language school one day, even if only as a part-time worker.”

Mika-san did not seem fully satisfied in her current job because of its monotonous nature and the feeling that her abilities were untapped. Also because she wanted to use English at work and this was possible. But instead of acting on her feelings and fulfilling her wishes, she faced the dilemma of being caught between her own desire to find a job in which she could use English and her parents’ desire that she continue working for a well-known company, and she had chosen to remain in stable employment. In this sense, Mika-san appeared to have more ‘traditional’ views towards gender norms compared to the other young women, whom I discuss below. During our second interview I asked her whether or

⁵ By the contrast, cooperation which never transferred assistant employees to executive track at least in the past three years was 48.8%. For a more detail account, see http://www.mhlw.go.jp/general/seido/koyou/danjokintou/dl/cource_joukyou.pdf, accessed November 2014.

not she would continue working after marriage, and she replied to me:

It would depend on my partner, but I do not have a boyfriend at the moment, so cannot think about a future husband. I went to the girls' school which continued until university, so I had never talked to boys until joining the tennis society at university. I do not have a strong desire to continue my current job after marriage, but I really wanted to continue dancing ballet.

Indeed, Mika-san was obsessed with ballet. According to her, it took up 30% of her life. She had started dancing ballet six years previously and at the time of my fieldwork she was going to lessons three times a week. She had recently started wearing toe shoes, as noted in Chapter 4, and was only the third beginner to be allowed to do so by the teacher. In order to develop her ballet skills she took detailed notes after each lesson in which she described how to dance the new ballet steps and also what the teacher had said to her and the other students during the lesson. She used these notes for preparation and as a review before the next class. Mika-san said, "Ballet helps me to release the stress I feel from my office work and to feel refreshed." Because her job was associated with her parents' desires, she chose ballet as a place to express her individuality.

As opposed to Mika-san, the rest of the unmarried young women at Hikari insisted on continuing to work after marriage or having children, and considered ballet as a tool to become an 'attractive' self. For example, take Natsuko-*chan*, a 25-year-old was also an office lady, and worked at a trading company on the general track despite graduating from university. As mentioned in Chapter 4, she used to do shift work in the sales department of

Tasaki-Shinju before her current job, but did not last long at it. She explained:

I liked my colleagues there but since I had sales quotas to fulfil and had to work shifts, including weekends, I felt tired and stressed and developed terrible skin rashes. I felt a great deal of pressure at work and suffered from depression. At about this time my mother had started dancing ballet at Peare and recommended me to go too. After starting to dance I realised that ballet was a release from the stresses of my job. Even if I felt I was too tired before class, I felt better after dancing ballet. I wanted to dance more, but at Tasaki-Shinju I was too busy, so I could only go to lessons twice a month. I thought that if I could combine work and dance I would be more *jibunrashii* (myself), so I decided to change my job. My new job is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the week and this allows me to attend ballet lessons three days a week [two lessons on one of those days made a total of four lessons a week]. While dancing ballet I am absorbed in myself (*jibun ni yō*). I look at myself in the mirror and think how beautifully I can dance. In ballet I can be narcissistic, which is very special to me. Ballet is the centre of my life (*Balle ha ikiteiru chushin*).

As in Mika-san's case, Natsuko-*chan* was absorbed in the world of ballet, but more extreme in that she had actively changed her job in order to dance ballet 'for herself' (*jibunnrashii ikiru*). During our interviews, Natsuko-*chan* used the term *jibun* (self or I) frequently to describe what dancing ballet meant for her. Indeed, this expression, denoting a sense of self, is commonly used among young people in the post-bubble era of increased individualism. I suggest that Natsuko-*chan* used the word, *jibun* not only to express a narcissistic self-love but also in reference to becoming a confident and attractive self to appeal to men and other women, a point to which I return below. I asked her if she wanted to continue working after

marriage and have a baby. Natsuko-*chan* replied:

I want to continue dancing ballet and working even if I get married and have children [in fact, five months after this interview she did get married and was still dancing and working]. I believe that hobbies cannot be fun without working (*shigoto atteno shumi*). My mother has continued in a full-time job throughout her life, since I respect my mother I want to do the same. I do not want to be a professional housewife who stays at home and enjoys *okeikogoto* without going to work. Although I would prefer to remain at home while my children are small, when my children become older I would want to return to work. However it would be difficult for me to do this, since I am on the general track. In my work, no one has taken maternity leave while on this track in the past. In Japan it is almost impossible to return to a job unless a woman has special skills, so if I become pregnant I am hoping to get some formal qualifications to help me get back to work when the child becomes older.

Natsuko-*chan* believed in the older generations' gender norms; namely that mothers should stay at home while their children are young. This stems from the idea of *ryōsai kenbo* and the belief that a child needs their mother to be at home until the age of three as discussed in Chapter 2. However, she declared that she did not want to be a professional housewife. According to a *Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office Report* in 2011, 60.8 % of unmarried young women in their 20s wished to continue working after getting married or having children. In reality, however, only 38 % of full-time women and 18% of irregular workers continue working after having children, and maternity leave was used by only 17.1 % of those 38 % of full-timers and 2% of those 18% of irregular workers between

2005 and 2009.⁶ In particular, the system is primarily designed for career-women who are expected to be executives (cf. Ogasawara 1998), thus despite Natsuko-*chan*'s wishes, it was difficult for her to continue working. Nevertheless, Natsuko-*chan* was at least able to combine both her work and her hobby as she desired.

Haken shain (temporary workers)

Two unmarried women in their early 40s were dancing in Hikari ballet studio. Although they are not categorised as young because of their age (see Chapter 4), they shared similar thoughts on marriage, jobs and ballet with unmarried young women. Mayuko-san, who was in her early 40s, told me during our interview that she had worked at Hewlett-Packard as a *haken shain*⁷ for ten years. After graduating from university she was employed on the general track job as a desk worker in a financial company for five years and enjoyed it. However, she was not originally interested in finance, so she felt limited by her work and decided to move elsewhere. Since a friend of hers had found a new job as a *haken shain*, Mayuko-san decided to follow suit. She had worked in four different companies until landing her current job working as a call centre group leader and maintaining Hewlett-Packard's home pages. She claimed that:

I feel happy when I help staff or customers, but sometimes I struggle to cope with being both a group leader and the website maintainer. I want to be a full-time worker,

⁶ For a more detailed explanation of gender viewpoints among men and women, see the abovementioned Whitepaper (footnote 1), http://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/whitepaper/h25/zentai/html/zuhyo/zuhyo01-03-04.html, Accessed November 2014.

⁷ In Japan a *haken shain* finds work via temping agencies, but unlike in the UK, almost 90% of *haken shain* are women (who are usually under 35). Their salary is low at about 2,500-3,500 yen per hour (£10-15 per hour), which is 30-40% less than regular employees. Furthermore, some companies provide only minimal benefits to their temporary employees. Most companies require *haken shain* to work for eight hours a day, Monday to Friday, and their contract needs to be renewed every year. Unlike in the UK, most *haken shain* stay (or wish to stay) at the same jobs for more than a year (Weathers 2001).

but since I am a *haken shain*, I know that this is not possible, given company policy. I do not have any firm ideas about an ideal job, but I admire people who are specialists, because I am not. I am interested in many things, but have never focused on one thing in particular.

As noted in Chapter 2, irregular workers such as *freeters*, *haken shain* and part-timers are increasing in Japan. Compared to part-timers, the number of *haken shain* is small. For example, only 3.5% of women worked as *haken shain* in 2014 (Ministry of Welfare, Law and Health 2014).⁸ However, because of lower wages and no requirement for employers to offer job security or any benefits, increasing numbers of companies employ *haken shain* as a replacement for *OLs* (Aoshima 2007: 110-111). Nevertheless, Mayuko-san considered her job status to be *shikataganai*, but wanted to continue working after marriage or having a baby.

I not only work for financial reasons, but also because I want to contribute to society and find my real self (*honto no jibun*). I hope to continue in my job as long as I can, even after getting married and having children. However, it would be difficult for me to do so as long as I remain a *haken shain*, because there is no *fukuri kosei* (welfare programme) for *haken shain*. I do not have a boyfriend now, but I want to get married someday. However, if I cannot find a suitable partner, I do not mind remaining single.

Much like Natsuko-*chan*'s case, her job status would prevent her from continuing work if she decided to have children. Indeed, as noted above, governmental statistics show that between 2005 and 2009 nearly no irregular workers were able to take a maternity leave

⁸ For a more detailed explanation of the number of *haken shain*, see http://www.mhlw.go.jp/file/05-Shingikai-12602000-Seisakutoukatsukan-Sanjikanshitsu_Roudouseisakutantou/0000023062.pdf, accessed January 2015.

(Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office 2013). According to Ueno and Nobuta, unmarried irregular workers are in potential danger of becoming part of the working class in the future. Because they lack job security and have low salaries, if they remain single and continue to be irregular workers the financial independence they now enjoy could be at risk after their parents' deaths due to the lack of a pension, any savings or insurance (2011: 53). In the case of Mayuko-san, she was a full-time employee, thus she could support herself financially, lived alone and danced ballet at the time of our interviews (unlike the majority of young graduates who can find only irregular jobs from the beginning). However, because she lacked any intimate relationships and was uncertain about her future, Mayuko-san said that ballet provided her with great joy. "Dancing ballet has been my *akogare* since my childhood. So, I feel very happy now that I am dancing ballet."

All of the unmarried dancers at the Hikari Ballet Studio held office assistants' jobs, although six of eight had graduated from university. Their jobs left them with enough time to dance ballet, as *OL* or *haken shain*, usually work from nine in the morning to five at night and are seldom asked to do overtime (see Chapter 2). In fact, career women friends of mine pointed out that if these women had been working as executive track full-timers they would have had no time for *okeikogoto*, such as ballet. In turn, of course only one sixth of *OLs* felt satisfied with their assistant's job compared to career track women (see Chapter 4 for a more details).⁹ My young informants tended to accept their subordinated role at companies as *shikataganai* despite their wish to find their ideal, or a full-time, job and to continue working after marriage and having children. Therefore, they reproduced the

⁹ Not surprisingly, there are also significant differences in salaries between career track-women, general-track and *heken shain*. According to economic magazine titled *President* in 2009, 51.8% of female career track's annual salary was between 3,000,000 yen (£12,500) and 5,000,000 yen (£20, 833) On the other hand, 53% of general-track and 78.4% of *heken* earn less than 3,000,000 yen (Shirakawa 2009: 90-92).

‘traditional’ subordinated gender role at their workplace. However, as Rosenberger (2013) argues, this does not mean that young unmarried women have no ability to assert a sense of selfhood in their life. In fact, young generation women in my study tried to show their individuality by becoming absorbed in their *jibun* through dancing ballet.

Indeed, just as several dancing women used the term *jibun* frequently during our interviews, many scholars point out that since the 1990s expressions such as living or working for oneself (*jibun rashiku ikiru* or *hataraku*), self-exploration (*jibun sagashi*), my real self (*honto no jibun*) or *jibun migaki* (literally self-polishing, but colloquially self-cultivation) are common among young people (cf. Cave 2007: 37; Kanbara 2004: 27; Nakano and Wagatsuma 2004: 138; Rosenberger 2013; Ueno and Nobuta 2011). For example, Goldstein-Gidoni argues that contemporary young women’s obsession with *jibun migaki* is embedded with “appearance, leisure and pleasure”, thus they are far removed from the old generations’ self-cultivation, namely “self-discipline” or “moral-training” (2012: 180). The cultivation of appearance or self-display was a focal point for young women to dance ballet (see Chapter 5). These women tried to appeal to both women and men by becoming attractive and confident self as noted in the case above

Some unmarried women particularly utilised ballet to find the suitable marriage partners. On the surface level, unmarried women appeared simply to be absorbed with dancing ballet. One dancing middle-aged mother even said to me: “Many unmarried women at the studio are too absorbed with ballet and need to be careful not to end up being single.” She was implying that absorption in a hobby made them less eligible and less interested in finding partners or in marriage. In fact, five women at the studio in their 30s and two in their 40s

were single and without boyfriends, despite the still prevalent expectation that women get married and have children, as mentioned in Chapter 2.

However, I suggest that although they were not desperately looking for partners, they were not uninterested in getting married. In fact, the sociologist Yamada Masahiro (2007) argues that among young people the desire to get married has not declined compared to previous eras. For example, in 2005 approximately 90% of young people said that they wanted to get married, but nearly half of them claimed that they would wait until they met suitable partners (ibid.: 45-47). Moreover the image of an ideal husband has clearly changed from the pre-bubble era's 'three highs' (high education, high income and physical height) to 3c (comfortable, cooperative and compatible), and several scholars point out that this change is related to female empowerment which allows them to search for the 'right' husband rather than one determined through economical dependency (cf. Aoshima 2007; Goldstein-Gidoni 2012).

In the case of my *OL* informants, however, I suggest that they were looking for husbands somehow between the 3 highs and the 3Cs. Because of their low wages and lack of job security, *OLs* still needed some financial support from any future husband. As noted in Chapter 4, in the post-bubble era *OLs*' weak financial position makes them less attractive for middle-class men as marriage partners compared to previous eras. Thus, I suggest that ballet was important for some unmarried young women in order to cultivate their middle-class feminine beauty as a way to appeal to men and also to become more attractive compared with other unmarried *OLs*. Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, (average) middle-class Japanese men prefer women who have slim figures with less muscular bodies.

Ballet is believed by my young informants to help create elegant and delicate middle-class feminine bodies.

In sum, although my young informants performed traditional gender roles at their workplace, in the ballet studio they cultivated *jibun* in order to be confident women or attractive marriage candidates. It is true that marriage is still considered as a ‘rite of passage’ to become proper adult in Japanese society, thus young dancing informants were still affected by older gender norms and hoped to get married one day. However, they were not just waiting to be chosen by men as had older generations (see chapter 2). Indeed, Deacon (2013) argues that women are now often seen to chase boys, and these women are called ‘predatory females’ (*nikushokukei-joshi*) in stark contrast with ‘herbivore men’ (*sōshokukei-danshi*). These terms underscore a social phenomenon that has been prevalent since the late 2000s. Both girls and boys are considered by several scholars to be acting contrary to their parents’ generation (middle-class) gender ideals; stay at home mothers and corporation warrior *salarymen* fathers (cf. Deacon 2013; Fukasawa 2009). In particular, herbivore men are often characterised by their passive attitude (by a lack of confidence) towards having relationships with women, and towards marriage as well. Therefore, young unmarried informants actively utilised ballet in order to appeal to other women as well as to find suitable future partners while negotiating it with older gender norms.

Professional Housewives

Young housewives: cultivating the self to become beautiful housewives and the perfect *kyōiku mama*

As noted in Chapter 2, even during the period of rapid economic growth period there were few professional housewives, and in particular during the post-bubble era the number of

full-time housewives began decreasing because husbands could no longer financially support their wives to stay at home (cf. Aoshima 2007). Nevertheless, there were four young and five middle-aged housewives at the Hikari Ballet Studio. And all of them, apart from one, had graduated from university and were married to white-collar *salaryman*. They can therefore be considered middle-class women, with their status making it possible for them to be both professional housewives and to dance ballet. However, most such women were expected to be full-time housewives, regardless of their wishes, because of their husbands' or broader familial and social demands. In particular, young housewives who had enjoyed a self-centred lifestyle before marriage faced the dilemma of being between the pre-bubble era's 'traditional' gender norms and the post-bubble's emphasis on individuality. For example, all of the young professional housewives pointed out that ballet helped them to be associated with society again (as opposed to being completely immersed in the world of husband and childcare) whilst it provided them with opportunity to cultivate their own interests. This was significantly different from older students who felt constrained by older traditional norms and considered ballet to be a form of escape from their family burdens.

Indeed, as noted in Chapter 2 Goldstein-Gidoni (2012) argues in her research on housewives in Japan that young unmarried women's self-cultivation in terms of appearance or beauty is also recognised in young housewives, namely the *oshare-mama* (fashionable mothers). Yamane also points out that young mothers (in their 20s) do not want to be seen as mothers (*mamani miraretaku nai*), which often refers to the older type of mothers who did not care about their appearance and were selflessly devoted to childrearing (2008: 80-82). At the Hikari Ballet Studio two ideal types (two general groups) of young housewives emerged from my fieldwork; the beautiful housewives who continued to cultivate their

appearance like the *oshare-mama*, and the perfect *kyōiku mama* who identified themselves through domestic work and their children's education. I examine how both types of mothers utilised ballet to cultivate themselves from a hedonistic perspective like unmarried young women while dealing with older gender norms. For example, Sachiko-*chan*, a 29-year-old married woman, said:

Going to ballet lessons provides me with the opportunity to see and talk to many people, as I feel I am stuck at home as a housewife. After graduating from university, I worked in a trading food company, Nisshoku,¹⁰ for four years on the executive track as a seller and manager in the Wedgwood section in the Mitsukoshi department store. Although I had not wanted to quit when I got married, I did so because the company expected married women to leave and this included workers on the executive track. Also, despite the fact that most of the salespeople were women, the company required employees to work long hours without any support system such as a childcare provision. As a result almost all women working there were single...in fact there were no married women with children and very few even without children.

As explained in Chapter 2, in Japan there is a lack of nursery schools, and related support from spouses, companies and the state for working mothers. Although it is not uncommon for *OLs* to *kotobuki taisha* (literally retire happily, but colloquially this applies to leaving a company job because of marriage). Some companies even expect women on the executive track to do this. Indeed, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare showed that in 2011

¹⁰ The Nisshoku Company was established in Osaka in 1948. Not only Wedgwood but also several brand name products including Disney are sold there. For a more detail, see <http://www.nisshoku-foods.co.jp>, accessed November 2014.

nearly 30% of full-time women left their jobs after marrying.¹¹

Sachiko-*chan* had married a council worker one and a half years before I met her. They were both Nara city natives, but shortly after marriage he had come to Tokyo for a year because of his job and she had followed him. Although she was hesitant about coming to Tokyo, she felt she could not let him go alone (*tanshin funin*). Sachiko said:

I do most of the housework, but my husband helps me as much as he can. I am not bothered about doing housework and I particularly like cooking, but I do not want to just stay at home. I like going out to see people and doing social and public things, so I started ballet. However, I would prefer to work again rather than just doing *okeikogoto* because I want to be “needed by society” (*hitsuyō to saretai*). I plan to get a job after returning to Nara next year. My husband told me that it is my choice, and he does not mind if I get a job or not, but he wants me to be at home before he comes home from work. This is because before marrying, I used to return home after midnight and he does not want to be in the same situation again, especially after our marriage. So, I think that it might be better to get an *arubaito*¹² rather than a full-time job since I have to do housework as well.

Sachiko-*chan* was also thinking about having children.

I want to have two or three children and if they are girls, I want them to learn ballet.

¹¹ For a more detail account, see http://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/whitepaper/h25/zentai/html/zuhyo/zuhyo01-00-27.html, accessed November 2014.

¹² *Arubaito* are part-time jobs but with fewer hours and less responsibility than the part-time jobs known as *pāto*, as detailed in Chapter 3.

I want to stay at home until they start going to nursery or elementary school, and then I will probably get an *arubaito*. In the future, after all my children are grown up, I want to run a rural bed-and-breakfast or café with my husband.

While her husband was the breadwinner, Sachiko-*chan* was trying to cope with the ‘traditional’ gender role of *ryōsai kenbo* by doing domestic work, staying at home when necessary and working as *arubaito* only at the times her husband, and society, deemed acceptable. Indeed, in 2011 approximately 55 % of young husbands expected their wives to do the majority of household work although this figure is lower than previously.¹³ As a newly arrived professional housewife, she barely knew anyone after moving to Tokyo. Thus, ballet was a first step for her to get out of house, have a connection with society and cultivate herself. As noted in the previous chapter she was interested in the cultivation of her appearance or feminine beauty. During our interview she also said: “I wish there were more men in ballet studios [at the time there were only two men at Hikari] because dancing with men would be a good way for me to improve my technique.” Unlike older students who did not want to dance with men (see Chapter 5), she considered dancing with men as a way of providing her with pleasure and personal benefits.

As noted above, the ideal husband for many unmarried young women was a 3C one (comfortable, cooperative, and compatible). Goldstein-Gidoni argues that a more realistic ideal husband for a young housewife is a person who can afford and allow her to pursue hobbies or hobby-like-jobs. She also notes that young housewives know how to use husbands and money to pursue their own interests (2012: 76, 209). Indeed, Sachiko-*chan*

¹³ For a more detail about male perspective of gender roles, see http://www.gender.go.jp/research/kenkyu/dansei_ishiki/pdf/chapter_3_1_1.pdf, accessed November 2014.

said that several married friends of hers were jealous of her being able to dance ballet because they had no time to enjoy hobbies. However, similar to the aforementioned unmarried informants, she did not want to be *just* a housewife. In fact, during our interview she told me a surprisingly similar story to Mika-san's about her dream job. She said: "I fancy being an English teacher, even just as a part-time lecturer. I studied English literature at university, and even have qualifications as a junior high and high school English teacher." Therefore, I suggest that her plans to work an *arubaito* conform to both her husband's and society's expectations, but that she also tried to pursue her interests through hobbies and hoped eventually to continue to do so through some potential future employment.

On the flipside, other professional housewives were *kyōiku mama* who keenly focused on their children's education like the mothers discussed in chapter 3. However, the housewives in this chapter considered ballet to be a tool they could utilise to identify themselves not as *kyōiku mama* but as independent women. For example, Miyuki *sensei* at 36 years old was a ballet teacher and not a student. She had given up working against her wishes and had decided to be a housewife for the sake of her family. She had also ceased to dance because of housework and childcare, although she was a good amateur dancer. Thus, teaching ballet provided her with the opportunities to be herself. What is interesting is how her life changed after marriage and giving birth, and how this related to what ballet meant to her as I show below.

Miyuki's World:

Miyuki *sensei* was married with four children. She taught an adult beginners class at the

T.K. Ballet Studio. Miyuki *sensei* had danced ballet at T.K. Ballet since she was three years old and had studied at the department of dance at one of Japan's elite women's colleges, Ochanomizu University. She lived in Denen-chofu, an expensive area in Tokyo. I was told that she and her husband had had a new house built for them at a cost of 100 million yen (£417,000). I conducted Miyuki *sensei*'s third interview in this impressive home, situated on top of a hill offering a fine view of Tokyo. This was a two-story house with a car parked in front, although there was no garden. Given this lifestyle in the heart of costly Tokyo it is clear that they are upper-middle class.¹⁴ However, despite her luxurious lifestyle on the surface, during the interviews she told me how she had experienced an agonising transition from a confident young unmarried woman to a full-time working mother, so as to become the perfect *kyōiku mama* largely shaped by older gender norms. Her example clearly demonstrates how gender ideals changes over the female stage of life through being single, working, to being married and having children, and how ballet can help housewife feel independent again.

A job, marriage and husband

Miyuki *sensei* said that after graduating from university she had started working at a private girls' school, Chōfugakuen, as a gymnastics teacher. She worked there full-time from 8:15-16:15, but usually worked overtime until 6 or 7 p.m. without any extra pay. Moreover, since she specialised in dance, she was the dance society teacher. After working as a teacher for a year she got married. She had met her husband, who was six years older, at a cram school when she was a university student. He was a teacher there and she had worked as a part-time assistant to various teachers. A year after marriage she became pregnant, but it was not

¹⁴ Miyuki *sensei* and her husband had once been on television, because at their wedding they had given their guests CDs of piano music that her husband had composed and recorded. In the program they talk while standing in front of the piano like a model middle-class couple.

planned; from her reflective character, I was surprised to hear about this lack in family planning. She took maternity leave for a year from the girls' school and so lost the chance to have *tannin* (her own class). However, since she really liked teaching and looking after the dance society students, she continued working there. Miyuki *sensei* said:

It was sometimes tough to manage both work outside the home and housework without having support from anyone else. For example, when my son contracted chickenpox, nobody offered to help me look after him. Since my husband was very busy at work, I could not ask him to take time off in order to help look after our son. My husband worked from morning until late evening (about 10 p.m.) at *Yobikō* and *Shingakujuku*,¹⁵ except on Sundays. According to him the students come to the class because of him, so he cannot take time off from work or ask anyone to substitute for him.¹⁶ Also, since my mother was busy working at the time and my husband's parents live in Hokkaido, the extended family could not help either. As a result, I ended up being absent from my new job as a physical education teacher for four days. Although one or two days would have been acceptable, four was too long, especially for a new recruit. I created inconveniences for all the other teachers (*Minani meiwaku wo kaketa*).

According to Ishii-Kuntz, since 2000s young husbands are being more cooperative with household work and childrearing compared to men from older generations. She argues that

¹⁵ *Yobikō* and *shingakujuku* are both types of cram schools. In *yobikō* the students are usually studying to pass university entrance exams. They are generally third-year high school students or *rōnin-sei* (students who have failed their first attempt and are preparing for next year's exam). *Shingakujuku* are open to any type of student, but typically target advanced level students.

¹⁶ In the *yobikō* in particular, students are desperate to pass university entrance exams and many select classes depending on the teacher. Popular *yobikō* teachers are called '*karisuma-kyōshi*' (charisma teachers) and some earn 50,000,000 yen (£208,300) annually, which is far higher than university professors in Japan. Apparently, Miyuki-sensei's husband was one such *karisuma-kyōshi*.

while this is a response to women's changing demands, the government encourages men to stay at home with the family because of worries over the low birth-rate. These 'helpful' young husbands are called "*ikumen*", and in 2010 the word was chosen as one of the year's *ryukogo* (popular words) (Ishii-Kuntz 2013: 1). On the other hand, other young husbands remain unreliable, and this tendency is emphasised if their wives are professional housewives (cf. Okano 2009) or if the husbands work long hours (cf. Ishii-Kuntz 2013; Matsuda 2005). Miyuki *sensei* was not an exception to these general trends. Therefore, when Miyuki *sensei* had her second child, she thought that she could not keep doing both her job and childcare.

I asked the school to move me from full-time to part-time teacher status, but this was not acceptable. Since I had my first child soon after starting the job, I was not able to build up my career enough to have the flexibility of a senior teacher. I really hesitated about quitting the job because I wished to have *tannin* status and also to continue teaching at the dance society. However, since I felt I could not rely on my husband for childcare and did not want to inconvenience the other teachers, I left my job when I was 30 years old. I felt very conflicted (*Totemo kattō shita*).

Miyuki *sensei*'s dilemma was that she was caught between the independence her job offered her and the expectations of motherhood her husband wanted her to meet. In the end, since Miyuki *sensei* had always wanted to have at least three children, she said that she decided to be a professional housewife and stay at home in order to support her family. "My female friends and colleagues told me that working mothers with two children could handle both work and childcare by themselves, but that a third child would necessitate some support, whether husband, parents or company. I agree with them."

Indeed, according to Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2011 the percentage of women who continue working after having the first child were 32%, after the second child was 23.1% and after the third child was only 12.8%.¹⁷ Nowadays some married women, especially if they are working, have solved this problem by living near their mothers, enabling them to ask their mothers to look after their children (cf. Aoshima 2007; Goldstein-Gidoni 2012: 78; Katsuki, et al. 2008). Although Miyuki *sensei* could not ask her mother for help when she was working at the school, some of my interviewees said that their mothers were their most reliable helpers since neither the government nor companies provided enough support for them. At the time of interview Miyuki *sensei* had four children, with the last child again unplanned. She said, “I think that I will not be able to return to work until my children become junior high school students although I do not have any concrete plans about returning. Since I want proper work, I am not interested in working as a part-timer.” By the time of our third interview, Miyuki *sensei* was trying to be a *kajiwo kiwameru* (housework specialist) and to do it as efficiently as she could.

I usually wake up at 5 a.m. and do all the laundry before the family wakes up. Then, I prepare breakfast for everyone and the children go to school at 8 a.m. The one and three-year-old usually stay at home and spend most of their time here with me. Although I sometimes take them for a walk or to the park, since there are so many things to do at home I do not go out every day.

In fact during the interview her two younger children were at home as well, watching the animated film *My Neighbour Totoro* (Miyazaki 1988). They seemed happy playing by

¹⁷ For a more detail account, see White Paper
http://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/whitepaper/h25/zentai/html/zuhyo/zuhyo01-00-27.html, accessed November 2014.

themselves, and Miyuki *sensei* said that she seldom needed to supervise them. Now a woman who formerly had had a confident and independent image appeared to conform to the middle-class housewife ideal so as to support her husband and children. As with many women in Chapter 5, her body was controlled by normative and external forms of power. She had four children without any family planning, and despite her wishes had become a professional housewife. Although she liked children, she did not seem to be totally happy about her situation. In fact, during the interviews she asked me: “What do you think about a person who has qualifications, but does not get a job?” Obviously she was asking me about herself. I replied: “There are many people who cannot get jobs because they do not have any qualifications, so I think that the situation sounds *mottainai* (a wasted opportunity). . . .” She listened to me without saying anything.

However, unlike older generations who devoted themselves to childrearing, as if it was fulfilling an unsatisfied feeling in their own lives, Miyuki *sensei* had become absorbed in her children’s activities as a *kyōiku* mama not only for children but, importantly, for her own self and identity as well. For example, she said: “Next year my oldest son will take the examination to enter a private junior high school and I am helping with his studies. In order to teach him four different subjects I am studying by myself as well.” Her children were also doing lots of *okeikogoto*, “Two of my sons are taking painting and English conversation classes. The oldest son is on the football team and plays four times a week. My husband or I go to see his matches on the weekend if we have time. Since my husband can play the piano very well, he teaches it to children.” Like middle-class mothers in Chapter 3, she tried to live vicariously through her children’s activities, but unlike those she also had danced and taught ballet.

Ballet and feelings of independence

As mentioned earlier, Miyuki sensei had started dancing ballet at the T.K. Ballet Studio in early childhood. Because she really loved ballet, she had tried to continue dancing there even after beginning her job and having a baby.

When I became a mother, I was even working on Saturdays. So, I joined a Sunday ballet class to keep in practice, and left my child with my parents in Yokohama. Although I was able to take part in the stage performance that year, one lesson a week had left me feeling *monotarinai* (dissatisfied) with my dancing. I had therefore decided to concentrate harder on ballet and began taking three lessons a week from Friday to Sunday when I left my job after having my second child. I wanted to perform perfectly in my next stage performance, so on Fridays I took my two children to my parents' house and stayed there until Sunday evening, when we returned home for the children's school on Monday. Although my husband did not seem happy about it, I told him that it would be my last stage performance and so *tokifuseta* (convinced) him.

Goldstein-Gidoni argues that a housewife is required not only to get permission to pursue *okeikogoto*, but also has to convince her husband that she can definitely manage both household chores and *okeikogoto* (2012: 182). However, I heard from another student that Miyuki *sensei*'s husband asked her to give up stage dancing and concentrate on caring for the children because she used to faint during rehearsals due to losing so much weight for the stage performance. She did not mention that, and told me a slightly different story:

Through dancing three times a week, I had created the right sort of body for the stage

and had practised until I felt that I could do everything as well as possible. I performed twice on stage after having my second child, and gained a certain amount of satisfaction from this. I then retired from stage performing and from dancing at the T.K. Ballet Studio.

Fortunately for Miyuki *sensei*, when she quit her job, Kakinuma *sensei*, the owner of the T.K. Ballet Studio, asked her to teach ballet there. After her experience of pregnancy and giving birth, she had become very interested in the body's anatomy, so she happily started teaching a stretching class every Thursday. She explained to me: "Since my classes are for adult beginners and are held at noon, most of the students are housewives. I like talking to the students since I think that I am in a similar situation to them. I came to know a different world (*Chigau sekai wo shitta*).” I assume she meant that although she was a highly-educated middle-class mother, she could communicate well with her students, who were of a lower status than her, because like her, they had children too. She also said: "In contrast to me or my former classmates, adult beginners come to the lessons for fun, so I tried to make the lesson interesting for them. I prepare new steps for the students before each lesson and write them down to use during the lessons.”

Analysing her narrative it becomes obvious how she was serious not only about becoming housewife but also teaching ballet. Nakano (2014) argues that a career woman tends to be more trapped into being a full-time housewife after having children. The woman knows that her elite husband is unreliable and unlikely to cooperate with domestic work and so she tries to do everything perfectly in terms of work, household labour and childrearing and often ends up frustrated with her inability to manage it all. In order to teach every Thursday,

Miyuki *sensei* used to take her children to her parents' or her sister's house and ask them to look after the kids. "However," she said:

Since my mother has recently left her job, she has offered to come to my house every Wednesday evening and stay over to care for my children while I am teaching. So, I now feel much more relaxed about my job. Teaching ballet at the T.K. Ballet Studio is one of the most *ikinuki* (relaxing times) in my current daily life.

Miyuki *sensei* called teaching ballet her job. As noted above housewives do not want to work for income, but wish to have hobby-based occupations. Therefore, despite her husband not being cooperative with house work I suggest that within a constrained social structure Miyuki *sensei* could explore her sense of self to some degree through ballet. She ended our interview by saying, "Although my pay for teaching is virtually nothing, just enough for my transport, I really appreciate that fact that Kakinuma *sensei* has provided me with the opportunity to teach ballet."

In sum, all of young housewives wanted to return to work and to feel independent as they did before marriage. However, this was difficult for many of them in their current situation. For example, in some cases their husbands might be transferred anywhere for their jobs (*tenkin*), while others had been asked by their husbands to take full responsibility for domestic work. These women commonly believed that they should stay at home whilst their children were young. Like young unmarried women, therefore, young housewives focused on cultivating their own interests (a hedonistic perspective) yet still negotiated a

socially acceptable path through older gender norms. While aiming to become attractive housewives or a perfect *kyōiku mama*, young mothers tried to reproduce traditional gender roles albeit in a more contemporary way without selflessly devoting themselves to childrearing. Goldstein-Gidoni argues that young mothers' ideas about their own social role and position are best described as "compressed between the more conservative ideas of their mothers' generation" and individualistic ideas of unmarried young women (2012: 135). I argue that this well explains the situation of young dancing housewives at the Hikari Ballet Studio.

Middle-aged housewives: Escape from domestic problems in terms of marriage and *kaigo* (elder care)

All five middle-aged housewives, on the other hand, appeared more constrained by the 'traditional' ideas of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology or the need to *gaman* (endure) compared to younger generations during our interviews. Unlike young housewives who were in a 'liminal' stage between neo-liberal individuality and older gender norms, elderly informants were deeply bound up with their family members' demands. In fact, as noted in the governmental survey underscored above, compared to the younger generations, older husbands had stronger views on the gendered division of labour, maintaining that women should be at home to run the household because their husbands were the breadwinners (cf. Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office 2013). Thus, ballet was a tool that older informants used to escape from their husbands' or family members' expectations that they be 'proper' middle-class housewives: being caretakers for their children, husbands and elders.

In the case of 60-year-old Noriko-san, for example, ballet seemed to be an escape from reality, especially in light of her marriage problems. Here I relate how Noriko-san slowly

opened up to me about her husband and life over the course of one semi-formal interview and three follow up interviews. During the first interview Noriko-san said that she had started dancing ballet twenty years earlier because she was a big fan of Maurice Béjart¹⁸ and wanted to dance like him. However, after the interview she said to me: “The real reason I started dancing ballet is my husband (*Hontono tokoro otto ga geninnnnano*). He used to stay out until midnight drinking or playing mah-jong after work, so I thought that I had to do something independently to enjoy my life.”

Since her reason for starting ballet was different from the majority of middle-class middle-aged women, in the second interview I asked her about her husband. She replied:

I do not go to the lessons on Saturdays because I want to spend time with my husband during the weekend. For the same reason, I did not want to participate in the stage performance because it requires rehearsals every weekend as the performance date nears. However, *sensei* asked me to be on the stage, so I could not refuse. I feel sorry for my husband.

Despite the fact that her husband constantly stayed out, she sounded as if she blamed herself due to being too involved in ballet. Indeed, in the third interview, she said that she had been absorbed in dancing ballet at her former ballet studio because the teacher was very knowledgeable about anatomy, like Hikari *sensei*. She explained:

¹⁸ Béjart (1927-2007) was a French ballet dancer and choreographer. He founded the 21st Century Ballet Company in Lausanne (renamed Béjart Ballet Lausanne), and his performances were usually categorised as contemporary dance. However, unlike most contemporary dance companies he preferred to hire dancers trained in classical ballet and he often recreated classical ballets, such as Stravinsky’s Fire Bird.

I had started to become interested in my own body. So, at the time I was going to lessons four or five times a week, and at the weekend I was out until the evening. Although my husband said nothing, he looked lonely and eventually he found fun outside (*kimochi ga soto wo muite shimatta*).

She called the incident a “*shippai*” (failure; at the time the meaning of *kimochi ga soto wo muite shimatta* and *shippai* was unclear to me, but I did not ask for the details). Since then she had tried to stay at home during the weekend when her husband was there. She did not even go out with her friends, although they told her not to worry about her husband too much. However, at the next meeting I learned her secret.

Near the end of my fieldwork, in November 2007, Noriko-san organised my farewell party at an Italian restaurant and many students came along. After the party, she and I went to a Japanese-style café to talk because during the party I had told her that my boyfriend had broken up with me after a three-year relationship. During the conversation I started crying in front of her, and she really sympathised with me and started weeping as well, which surprised me. She started explaining to me:

I had been separated from my husband for eight years and reconciled with him just three years ago.¹⁹ He used to have frequent affairs and I blamed him every time. One day he suddenly moved out of our house. I think that he wanted me to stop complaining to him about his affairs. Three years ago I saw him with a girlfriend in the street and I decided to break them up. So, I went to their house and took him back

¹⁹ When Noriko told me that she had been separated from her husband, I finally understood what she meant by “*kimochi ga soto wo muite shimatta*” and “*shippai*”, which she had brought up in our previous interviews.

home with me. My husband is very attracted to the younger women in the office because he is very kind to them, and many of them see him as a father figure. He still likes his ex-girlfriend even though she has a new boyfriend, and he still meets her two or three times a year although I have asked him not to. So, during September I stayed at a hotel for ten days, not returning home.

Although I danced with her that month, I had not realised that she was in such a predicament. Despite her anger, he seemed not to regret his behaviour. I said she should consider divorce, but she replied:

A fortune-teller told me I have had a connection with my husband in a previous incarnation (*zense*), and I believe that. So, I am reluctant to leave him. I have been paying the fortune-teller about 10,000 yen (£42) per hour, once a month, to help me solve my marriage problems.²⁰

After five hours in the cafe we went to the station together and talked there for a while. Eventually I said goodbye and tried to walk away, but she suddenly grabbed my hands and stopped me from leaving. We started talking about my boyfriend and her husband again, holding each other's hands. After saying goodbye to each other several times, we finally walked towards our separate stations.

Although most professional housewives were keen to talk about themselves during interviews, Noriko-san's was one of the most difficult formal or first interviews because she

²⁰ Rather than seeing counsellors some Japanese, especially women, see fortune-tellers, not only to discuss their future but also their personal problems, such as love relationships and marriage. Until recently, it was uncommon for Japanese people to see counsellors because it was considered *haji* (shameful) to share *uchi* (inside) problems with *tanin* (others).

did not disclose much about her personal issues. Instead she happily talked about things related to ballet, such as her favourite performances, dancers or choreographers and so on. She tried to conceal her personal problems until that last meeting, when I revealed my own problems to her. It seems that her husband wanted and expected indulgence from Noriko-san. As explained in Chapter 1, Japanese especially middle-aged housewives are expected to understand the feelings of husbands although some wives have the power to control their husbands (cf. Allison 1994; Doi 1981; Kondo 1990). In the previous chapter, I quoted Noriko-san saying that she had become less emotional as a result of making a new mind and body connection through ballet. Perhaps she was trying to escape from her marital situation, and gain a sense of calm (forgiving her husband) through controlling her body. Indeed, the expectations for *gaman* or self-sacrifice are not uncommon in her generations, a point I will analyse further later.

Middle-aged women escaping the elderly

In the case of other two of the middle-aged female students, ballet helped them feel liberated from family demands in another context, that of caring for elderly people (*kaigo*). For Yoshino-san in her 50s, for example, it was escape from the stress of looking after her mother at home at the time of our interview. Yoshino-san was married with two children, and she said her daughter was the first reason that she had started dancing ballet. Her daughter was a cheerleader at university and wanted to practise pirouettes, so had asked her mother if they could go to ballet lessons together. Since Yoshino-san had been longing to try ballet ever since her childhood, she thought that it would be a good opportunity. Although her daughter had stopped after only three months, Yoshino-san had continued ballet. “Because” she explained:

Through dance I find a way to release my pent-up emotions. After my father died from lung cancer ten years ago, my mother became sick. Although I used to help with my husband's work, running our own business at home, I had to stop to look after my mother. So, I wanted to have some hobbies outside the home and found ballet helped me escape from the stress of *kaigo*.

According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2010a),²¹ 69.4% of women are involved with *kaigo* compared to men (30.6%). As discussed in Chapter 2, the government relies on middle-aged women dutifully looking after their elderly parents and parents-in-law because it saves spending on welfare programs. While Yoshino-san accepted the social expectation, she tried to be herself through dancing. Similarly, Emi-san, a 50-year-old married woman, said that one of the reasons for her to start dancing ballet was that she was tired of looking after her mother-in-law and wanted an escape from reality (*genjitsu tōhi*). She said:

Twenty years ago my sister-in-law asked me and my husband to look after her mother, because the sister-in-law did not want to live with her any more. We asked our mother-in-law to move to our apartment building, she lives on the first floor and we on the third. However, my husband was very busy running his business and, although he appreciated me caring for his mother, he did not help at all. My sister-in-law did not share the burden at all despite being single, and she did not even appreciate my efforts. I ended up looking after my mother-in-law by myself alone. Soon after my own mother began to suffer increasingly from Parkinson's, and I

²¹ For a more detail account, see <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/k-tyosa/k-tyosa10/4-3.html>, accessed April 2013.

wanted to look after my mother in Nagano prefecture. However, my father told me that since I am the *yome* of another family I should prioritise caring for my mother-in-law and not worry about my own mother.

According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2010a), more women do *kaigo* for their own parents (20.9%) rather than their parents-in-law (15.2%), but during the pre- and post-war eras it was common for a *yome* (daughter-in-law) to look after her husband's family members. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the *yome* was the lowest position in the family hierarchy under the Meiji *ie* system. Although the number is now decreasing, older husbands more often expected their wives to look after their own mothers compared to younger generations.²² Emi-san was thus given the role of nursing her mother-in-law, despite her wishes. Emi-san explained:

I do everything for my mother-in-law, such as cooking, washing, cleaning, and taking her to the doctor's and so on. When she was in hospital, I even delivered meals three times a day to her because she did not like the hospital food. Although my mother-in-law has several medical problems, such as a stomach ulcer and blindness in one eye, none of them are life-threatening. Most of the time she creates problems for herself, for example by calling an ambulance even if she has only vomited. Since she has been weak since childhood, she is used to being attended to and becomes sick in her desire for attention. I call it a *wagamama byō* (illness based on selfishness).

She also confided:

²² Husbands' expectations about their wives caring for their mothers were 34.6% for men in their 60s and 22.6% for men in their 30s in 2011. For a more detail account, see http://www.gender.go.jp/research/kenkyu/dansei_ishiki/pdf/chapter_3_1_1.pdf, accessed November 2014.

Because I was tired of caring for my mother-in law and also I had a *kōnenki shōgai* (menopausal disorder), I became sick, physically and mentally (*shinshin tomoni*). I constantly argued with my husband about caring for his mother. I wanted to be carefree and run away from everything (*Subete wo horidashite nigedashita katta*). However, because of my son, I could not do it. Since my husband was always absent because of work, I have raised our son alone. I really love him, but perhaps because of my difficult situation I often felt frustrated with my son and scolded him although I now feel guilty about how I behaved towards him. I really needed time and space to become refreshed (*kibun tenkan*).

In order to protect herself (*jikobōei*) and keep her peace of mind, Emi-san tried to get out of the house as much as possible.

One day Emi-san had gone to the *Peare shakai hokenchō* (Peare social insurance agency) to pick up documents for her mother-in-law, and found that there was a cultural centre where several *okeikogoto* were organised. She explained:

Based on my timetable I considered yoga, ballet and Tai-chi, but finally chose ballet because the lesson time was best and the students were younger than in the other exercise classes. Because I was always with elderly people, I wanted to do something with younger people. Although I was not a particularly a big fan of ballet, [...three years before]... I started dancing in order to escape from my tough daily life. To be honest, I just wanted to escape from reality (*genjitsu tōhi*). I wanted to feel positive regarding my negative (*mainasu yōin*) life through dancing ballet.

Although Emi-san said she chose dancing ballet as a tool to escape from her mundane domestic reality rather than because of *akogare*, she seemed to have a certain image about ballet, such as something nice or a form of cultural capital compared to other forms of exercise.

In the beginning I was not sure if I could continue dancing ballet because I was poor at sport, and ballet is gorgeous (*hanayaka*). I often wondered “*Kokoni ite yoino kashira*” (Is it alright for me to be here?). However, I continue dancing because I like my classmates and teacher. I also noticed my physical condition improving. I wish to continue dancing ballet for at least ten more years.

Fortunately for Emi-san, a few years before I interviewed her, a new nursing-care insurance system was introduced and she could ask for home help to aid with looking after her mother-in-law. Moreover, she finally asked her sister-in-law to care for her mother. So from that point on Emi-san did not need too much help apart from going to the university hospital with her mother-in-law. She said: “I am not sure how long I can keep up the pace because it depends on the condition of my mother-in-law, but I want to enjoy the moment.” At the end of our interviews, she told me that she had never talked about taking care of her mother-in-law with her classmates in the ballet studio.

Ballet provided Emi-san with unexpected joy and she claimed it made her healthier, both mentally and physically. Although any form of physical *okeikogoto* would have helped her feel like that due to her previous lack of exercise and her burdens at home, learning ballet gave her confidence through an increase in symbolic and cultural capital. Everyone in her

family (especially her husband, mother-in-law and sister-in-law) asked Emi-san to bear the burden of caring for her mother-in-law as the *yome*. Thus, *kaigo* suppressed her as a social discourse and ideology, and she could not really resist it. As in the example of Noriko-san, both were expected to indulge others, often children and husbands, but also senior family members. Therefore, once she entered the studio she could forget about the demands of her family and feel free for a while. Ballet helped her to feel liberated from socio-cultural constraints.

In sum, older professional housewives at the ballet studio felt more constrained by gender norms than young counterparts because their family members' demands were regarded as more important than theirs. A common reason for older professional housewives to dance ballet, therefore, was to escape from domestic burdens at home unlike younger generations who even considered their housewife status to be an advantage in the pursuit of their hobbies. For example, even when Emi-san suffered from a menopausal disorder²³ or wished to go to work, her husband's family expected and convinced her to nurse her mother-in-law based on the 'traditional' gendered discourse that nursing elders is a *yome*'s job.

Ballet helped these women feel some release from their uneasy emotions against social pressures or discourses. Therefore, many women told me during interviews that they wanted to escape from their everyday reality into a world of ballet practice. As pointed out in the previous chapter, ballet is 'a dream world' where they can be away from dominant Japanese gender roles. In Noriko-san's case, she had started dancing ballet in order to

²³ According to Lock, Japanese women are expected to just "ride over" menopausal disorders as a result of the ageing process. In the case of American women, by contrast, the same condition is diagnosed as pathological (as a result of biological processes) (1996: 99).

release the stress resulting from her husband's infidelity. She did not see divorce as an option, not only because of her belief in a connection with her husband through *zense*, but also because she seemed to think that it was *shikataganai* for men to have love affairs. During the Meiji period, husbands' affairs were not only acceptable but also something to be expected; women, however, were put to death for the same conduct (Hendry 2003: 39).²⁴ In contemporary society extramarital love affairs in general are seen as unacceptable, and many marriages end in divorce when one spouse has an affair.²⁵ However, amongst wives from the older generation, a husband's philandering is still seen as acceptable to some degree. According to one survey, 17% of women do not mind their husband's liaisons as long as he keeps them private (*Asahi Shinbun* 04/07/2001).²⁶

In fact the divorce rate is going up considerably. For example, it has more than doubled from 0.74% in 1960 to 1.88 % in 2012 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2012).²⁷ However, divorce is not usually seen as an option for professional housewives due to their financial situation. In Japanese society it is unlikely that a wife would receive sufficient alimony to be self-supporting after getting a divorce.²⁸ As a result only full-time working mothers can afford to divorce, and it is almost impossible for professional housewives to be able to do so because of their financial dependence (Ogawa and Ermisch 1994; Tachibanaki

²⁴ Although during the Meiji era divorce was permitted under the Meiji Civil Code, in practice this was limited for women until the post-war era (Hendry 1981: 22).

²⁵ As recent examples, Japanese actresses such as Yuiko Takeuchi or Norika Fujiwara have got divorced soon after marriage because of their husbands' infidelity.

²⁶ 11% of men said they do not mind their wives having affairs under the same conditions.

²⁷ For a more detail account, see <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/jinkou/suikei12/dl/gaiyou.pdf>, accessed December 2014.

²⁸ Under the Civil Code Article 768, following divorce professional housewives can receive only 30% of the value of property, compared to working-women who can have 50%. Furthermore, a wife or husband can receive only 3,000,000 yen (£12,500) as alimony and 30,000 or 50,000 yen (£125 or £208) per month as child support if they can reach agreement.

and Sakoda 2013). However, in April 2007 new pension laws were introduced and as a result ex-wives can now receive more pension money. Scholars predicted an increase in the divorce rate amongst professional housewives because they could be less financially dependent on their husbands, but in fact the rate has further declined because of the economic recession (the divorce rate was 2.15% as the peak in 2002).

Moreover, as many professional housewives such as Emi-san point out, their children prevent them from dissolving their marriages. This is not only because of their dedication to their children, but also because of a fear of having insufficient money to bring up their children by themselves. Indeed, Tachibanaki notes that the most common reason preventing both men and women from divorcing is their children, but the number of women who took financial reasons into account was nearly double that of men (2008: 148). This shows the weak financial independence of professional housewives, which keeps the divorce rate low. Therefore, ballet provided opportunities for these subordinated older housewives to forget about their mundane life and to feel empowered.

Indeed, unlike young housewives who utilised ballet for self-cultivation from a more hedonistic perspective, it was difficult for members of the older generation to overtly express their sense of self through dancing ballet. As noted in the previous chapter, dance for self-expression might result in older informants being labelled *wagamama*. However, ballet is commonly regarded as a middle-class, feminine and passive form of dance, a form popularly viewed as lacking space to express a sense of self (see Chapter 1). Given this, I have argued, that even if they were afraid of being labelled *wagamama* through dancing on the stage, dancing ballet in the studio was used as a tool for elderly housewives to escape

from their domestic burdens and to mask their real reasons for dancing. This inter-generational difference also appeared in groups of full-time working mothers.

Full-time working mothers: “I am not just a mother”

In the Hikari Ballet Studio there were five young and three elderly married women who had continued working full-time. As pointed out throughout in this thesis, because of the traditional socio-cultural discourse, the majority of mothers with small children tried to stay at home as much as they can for childrearing. In this sense, full-time working informants had different perspective in terms of gender norms from the rest of women at the ballet studio. In particular, the importance of confinement at home is emphasised among middle-class older generations, thus they often do not return to their workforce after leaving. When their children become older, some only enjoy hobbies or volunteer work until they are required for *kaigo*. This partly explains why middle-aged informants had difficulties continuing to work. On the other hand, although rare, two of the young dancing women had small children when they were in their 30s. I suggest that they were the newest type of mothers who work, care for their children and enjoy hobbies. They were not only less constrained by ‘traditional’ gender norms such as *ryōsai kenbo* ideology like older generations, but found it even less necessity to negotiate or face a dilemma between new ideals and old values unlike the majority of the younger generation.

For example, Ohata-san (aged 36) was married with two children (aged four and nine.) She also worked. Her daughter had started ballet at Hikari studio first and Ohata-san followed her. She explained that the reason she had decided to continue dancing was because “dancing ballet gives me a chance to think about myself. I do not want to have any more

children because I want to have my own time (*jibun-no-jikan*) and space.” Ballet provided her with the space to “become herself” (*jibun*). However this is not a narcissistic or self-centered *jibun* like aforementioned unmarried women, but merely a space to have some freedom from work in and outside the home. Ohata-san had studied sociology at university and had then qualified as a high school social studies (*shakai-ka*) teacher, so after graduating she became a teacher at a disabled children’s school. She explained her job to me: “I have worked there for fourteen years, apart from 18 months for maternity leave. During weekdays I work from 8:30 to 18:00 and after work pick up my younger son from nursery school. When I cannot do so, I ask my husband’s parents, who live nearby, for help.” As noted above, it is difficult for full-time working mothers to continue working without some support, whether from their employers, their partners or parents. Although their number is small, 38.9% of women with children who are in full-time employment get support from their actual mothers, and 22.8% from their mothers-in-law (Morikawa 2008: 148; National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2011). Ohata-san sounded as though she was coping in regard to both working and indulging in her dance hobby with family support, but she claimed to be struggling to manage them:

I go to ballet lessons on Saturdays but often can only go twice a month because of work. It is difficult to cope with all my work, childcare and ballet, and it sometimes takes me more than three days just to fold the dried laundry. Although my husband is usually cooperative with the housework, during the rehearsals for previous stage performances, which at Hikari Ballet Studio are held twice a year, my whole family have been through a difficult time. For example, close to the date of the performance I needed to rehearse every weekend, including bank holidays, but since my family

usually goes out at the weekends, they, especially my husband, became unhappy. He started to complain about looking after the children so often, and kept asking me why I needed to dance ballet. Therefore, although I love performing, because of my job, childcare and household duties, it is very unlikely that I will be able to dance in the next stage performance.

Although her husband was relatively cooperative compared to the husbands of many of the aforementioned professional housewives, to some degree she was also pressured by the social expectations of being a wife and mother, and had some difficulties in carrying on her work and dancing hobby.

In contrast Umehara-san, who was a 38-year-old with three sons (aged 3, 9 and 11), had access to more support. Her children went to the same nursery school as Ohata-san's and they had become friends. Ohata-san had invited her to the ballet class, but in the beginning she hesitated because ballet was not familiar to her, and appeared as an inappropriate or unachievable form of cultural capital. "I felt shy about wearing leotards and had never imagined myself dancing ballet. Instead I thought I would do yoga or some similar form of exercise," she explained. Umehara-san had studied social welfare at university and got a job in Wakayama prefecture. She got married twelve years before moving to Tokyo, and was now working as a care manager. She continued:

I cycle to visit each client, and listen carefully to their needs. It is a great job, but I sometimes feel it is very stressful because I cannot always meet my customers' requests and I am torn between them and my company's staff. Although I sometimes

think about quitting, I have continued because I do not like giving up something once I have started it. Through working I can connect with society. My job provides me with money but also with social status and independence, which means I am not 'just' a mother. I think that working helps me keep a good balance between myself and my children. Although I am sometimes very worried about my children, I am unable to become too absorbed in their affairs because of my job. At the same time, having children also prevents me from becoming obsessed about my work. I manage to do all three, job, housework and ballet, despite having three children.

Umehara-san clearly claimed that she could find self-fulfilment through her job and childrearing. Several scholars point out while the majority of part-time mothers work for the sake of money, full-time working mothers often look for *yarigai* (self-satisfaction) in their work (cf. Aoshima 2007; Nakano 2014). Moreover, one governmental survey showed that full-time working mothers are less worried about childrearing compared to full-time housewives (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan 2003).²⁹ Indeed, she did not seem as constrained by social expectations as the aforementioned unmarried *OL* or professional housewives. I asked her what the secret was to doing all that she was doing. She replied:

I just try not to do them perfectly. Work, the nursery school and ballet school are within five minutes' walk of my house, and that probably helps me. It is important to have some support from both the workplace and home in order to continue working after childbirth. Since most customers prefer female helpers, in my office most of the staff are women and they are very cooperative with working mothers. For example,

²⁹ This survey showed that as a whole more than 60% of mothers were worried about childrearing in 2003. For a more detail account, see <http://www5.cao.go.jp/seikatsu/whitepaper/h15/honbun/html/15332c10.html>, accessed November 2014.

the working hours can be very flexible. Now I am working slightly less than full-time, from 9am to 4pm on weekdays because I need to pick up my children from nursery school. Moreover, since staff can bring our children to the office when we need to, I could return to work after only three or four months of maternity leave.

The majority of dancing women complained during our interviews of a lack of support from their employers or family members who would, could or actually did prevent them from continuing their jobs after giving a birth. Umehara-san's case really proved the existence of this condition. For example, her working hours were shorter than they would be as a full-time worker because her employer understands her situation, namely that she was a working mother with small children. Moreover, her husband was cooperative with childrearing as an *ikumen*. She said: "Both I and my husband's parents live in Wakayama prefecture, so it is difficult for me to ask them to look after the children. But, my husband is cooperative and helpful, and happy to assist with the housework and the childrearing." In fact during interviews many students in the studio commented on how supportive her husband was. Several mothers with small children including Ohata-san who had a relatively cooperative husband, could not join the stage performances because their husbands were reluctant to look after their children every weekend. However, Umehara-san did not have that kind of problem.

On the other hand, all of three older full-time working mothers felt more constrained by older gender norms. Abe-san, 69 years old, for example, said: "Since I retired four years ago, I finally could start dancing ballet, singing and swimming. While I was working, I thought I could not do anything apart from working and domestic chores". Kajimoto-san,

who was a 57-year-old married woman with two daughters aged 28 and 30, also said that she needed to wait until her daughters went to school although she could practise ballet earlier than Abe-san. She said: “When my eldest daughter was four I took her to ballet class, and ended up dancing myself when I was 40.” After graduating from university she got a job at a patent office, and apart from three months’ maternity leave for each of her daughters, she had been working there full-time for 35 years. She explained:

In those days women could take maternity leave for only a month before and after giving birth. My mother enabled me to both work and raise my children. My mother is a professional housewife, but has always impressed on me the importance of women having jobs. In particular, she had been very supportive when my children were small. For example, if my children were not feeling well in the evening the next morning my mother would arrive to look after them, even though it took an hour by train from her house in Omiya to my house in Sakurashinmachi. When my children had chickenpox, my mother took them back to Omiya and looked after them for a week. My husband, who is in his 60s and still working as an accountant, has not been particularly helpful with the housework and childrearing. But, he does not criticise my style of housework or childrearing either and this is unusual for his generation. Without my mother’s support it would have been difficult for me to carry on with my job.

Since Kajimoto-san’s husband was not a particularly helpful like other husbands in his generation (although she claimed that his attitude was ‘better’ than others), her mother’s support significantly encouraged her to continue working. As argued above, nowadays many married working women ask their mothers or mothers-in-law to take care of their

children. However, in her generation it was not easy to ask for help even from one's own mother because working mothers were considered to be morally wrong during the rapid economic growth period, a point I will explore further below.

In general, compared to dancing professional housewives, full-time working mothers who danced ballet had a tendency to be more satisfied with their daily lives regardless of their age. These women shared a number of common features, for example all of them were middle-class and frequently had some support from their families or workplaces. Indeed, without such support it would have been difficult for them to manage both work and childrearing, as mentioned earlier. Also, all these full-time working mothers had jobs which tended to give them more equal status with men, such as teaching, social work and civil service jobs. In general, these jobs are regarded as *josei no shokugyō* (female occupations) (Iwao 1993: 189; Lebra 1984: 302). Such workplaces cooperate with working mothers by providing the flexible working hours and their support systems are well-organised compared to many other places of employment. As pointed out in Chapter 2, for example, in most companies full-time employees cannot have flexible working hours in the way that my working mother informants did, regardless of their marital status. Indeed, this is one reason why the majority of female full-time employees end up as part-time workers after having children.

According to a Governmental survey, 70% of full-time employees said that there is a system for shorter or flexible working hours for childrearing parents at their workplace. However, only 27% of the respondents said they feel comfortable using the system despite the fact that 61.4% of women hope to work shorter hours when their children are younger

than six years of age (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2011).³⁰ Moreover, these full-time working mothers pointed out that they were able to return to their jobs after a short period of maternity leave (18 months maximum). For most workers it takes more than three years to re-enter the job market, because in their workplaces employees were encouraged to leave their jobs if they became pregnant and then return as part-timers after their children were grown-up. It is very difficult to return to the same full-time position after a career interruption, and according to Ueda (2007), between 1994 and 1999 only 18% of university-educated mothers could return to their earlier full-time position after a career interruption. My full-time working mothers seemed satisfied with the fact that they were able to connect to society and identify themselves not only as wives but also through their jobs as independent women, despite the manifold difficulties in their daily lives.

However, there were still generational differences. In particular, the young working informants enjoyed having multiple tasks, such as work, housework and hobbies, without being pre-occupied with the domestic sphere to the extent that the older generation had been. As Aoshima points out, contemporary young *ikumen* help with childrearing and encourage their wives to continue to work for self-fulfilment although the majority of husbands remain unhelpful in practical terms just like previous generations (2007: 222-225). Moreover, as mentioned above, the husbands of full-time working mothers are more cooperative than those whose wives are part-timers or not working (cf. Okano 2009: 222). In this sense, young full-time working mothers were a kind of role model for unmarried young women who want to enjoy both work and hobbies even after marriage albeit my

³⁰ In same survey, more than 60% of working mothers in irregular work said that there is no system for shorter or flexible working hours for childrearing parents. For a more detail account, see White Paper http://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/whitepaper/h25/zentai/html/zuhyo/zuhyo01-00-39.html, accessed November 2014.

young informants had not fully committed themselves to be full-time working mothers.

On the other hand, older working mothers used to feel guilty about not devoting themselves entirely to domestic work, because through the prevailing ideology it was considered to be morally wrong not to fully perform all of a mother's duties (Iwao 1993: 145; Lebra 1984: 249-50). Also, since the rapid economic growth of the 1950s, working mothers have tended to be seen as lower-class part-timers, as mentioned in Chapter 2. That is, until recently, apart from middle-class women, there were few full-time working mothers whose husbands were financially secure or who worked as professionals, such as doctors, academics or civil servants (Iwao 1993: 189), so working mothers were regarded as lower-class part-timers almost automatically.

For example, a middle-aged working mother, Kajimoto-san, told me during an interview that she felt different from most middle-aged students at the Hikari Ballet Studio because she was a working mother and they were professional housewives. There were few full-time working mothers in her generation, in contrast to current young mothers. In 1985 the number of working mothers was 1.36% lower than 2006 (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office 2006). Therefore, Kajimoto-san might even have found it unpleasant to be differentiated from the other middle-class women of her own age group who were mostly professional housewives. In this sense, young full-time working mothers best represented the post-bubble era's individualistic gender norms among women in the ballet studio.

Inter-generational change towards gender norms and sense of self

Expression their individuality was a key point for women to become involved in ballet. In

the post-bubble era young women in particular conform less to the older gender norms and have more aspirations to enjoying their freedom. Indeed, the popularity of the ‘bad girl image’ or of worries over youth deviance underscores how some young high schools students try to actively resist *ryōsai kenbo* ideology through modes such as their appearance (eg. fashions, hair styles) or expressing unacceptable gender coded behaviour (cf. Miller 2006; Yoder 2004).

However, young dancing women in the ballet studio were not completely free to express their individuality. Indeed, apart from full-time working mothers all of them declared that women should stay at home while their children are young. Yet, whilst negotiating with older gender norms and to be accepted by the society, young dancers utilised ballet in order to be more focused on becoming confident women from a more the hedonistic perspective such as finding the ‘right’ husband, becoming an attractive *jibun* or the perfect *kyōiku mama*. Older generations, by contrast, felt that they were more constrained by the older gender norms. Thus, ballet was a temporary ‘escape’ from daily burdens at home and liberated them from their expected gender roles. In this sense, dancing women in ballet studio represented inter-generational change towards gender norms and sense of self in the Japanese society. I shall explore both points in the next Conclusion chapter.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that middle-class Japanese women, both young and old, utilise ballet as a tool to liberate themselves or their daughters from their expected, and often viewed as submissive, gender roles. It further suggests that these women use ballet practices to express their sense of self in their everyday lives. I conducted this research because I have long been a ballet practitioner and have always been passionate about researching ballet. More to the point, the anthropology of dance has historically been neglected by mainstream researchers. However, there has recently been a focus on the representation of nationality, ethnicity and identity through dance in the post-colonial era. Nevertheless, even within this burgeoning research field, there is a lack of attention paid to the lived moving body in dance from a phenomenological perspective. Although some anthropologists have analysed moving bodies, the categorization of classical ballet under the rubric of western ‘high art’ has meant that it is often not regarded as a proper anthropological topic. Indeed, although classical ballet is learnt and enjoyed – by not only professionals but by amateurs as a hobby all around the world, including Japan – it has attracted little anthropological analysis. In particular, Japan, a non-western country, is paid attention to by anthropologists more for its indigenous or ritual forms of dance. This being the case, research on ballet in Japan has largely been ignored by both western and Japanese anthropologists. This thesis has been an attempt shed light on ballet practice and consumption in Japan.

While there is a lack of research on ballet in Japan there is also a dearth of discussion regarding Japanese who express themselves through hobbies. Even though some scholars started researching leisure in Japan from the 1990s, perhaps due to Japan’s shifting

economic and so politico-socio-cultural attitudes towards *okeikogoto*, the majority have asserted that leisure in Japan is constrained by traditional ethical values such as groupism or harmony rather than individualism, although there have been a few exceptions (cf. Hendry 1998; Horne 2002; Watts 1998). In particular, with exception of a few studies (cf. Kato 2004; Spielvogel 2003), there is little literature focusing on female practitioners engaging in popular hobbies. As I have outlined, this is because of stereotypical views that tend to regard Japanese women as ‘passive’ subjects rather than focus on their liberation through such events as the movement of their bodies or their drive towards the fulfilment of their desires and dreams.

With a focus on gender and notions of selfhood, the bulk of this thesis has dealt with three different ideal types of women and their engagement with the world of Japanese ballet; observing young mothers who enrolled their daughters in ballet lessons, young married and unmarried women, and older dancing women. These groups obviously cross generations, but one common point is that members are predominantly middle-class. I have focused on inter-generational differences in consuming ballet. I have discussed how my informants pursued personal empowerment by spending time on themselves or for their children through the practice of ballet. The particularity of the context of ballet in Japan was brought to the fore in Chapter 2. I argued that Japanese, and especially middle class Japanese, are largely constrained by gender ideals and socio-cultural hegemonic notions of masculinity and femininity (albeit young generations tend to express more neoliberal and globalised ideas and ideologies of individualism if compared to older generations). For example, middle-class women are expected to remain at home as professional housewives to support their *salarymen* husbands, care for children and familial elderly, as such they are expected

to conform to gender norms such as the *ryōsai-kenbo* ideology. Due to these conditions, I argue that when Japanese women consume ballet they do so in order to assert agency in a very particular way. Despite the fact that ballet is commonly perceived to be a western or globalised cultural product, ballet is also a localised practice.¹ Dependent upon this social context it is therefore ‘consumed’ differently. I have argued, for example, that in the majority of countries where ballet is practised at a profession level, a ‘ballet-type’ of body is considered to be essential in order to become a professional dancer and this embodied aesthetic is even important at the amateur level. However, in Japan and in contrast to such physical elitism, ballet can be learned and practised by anyone regardless of their body proportions. Emphasis is placed on personal fulfilment and desire. As I have argued throughout this thesis, daughters are urged to dance in order to gain confidence and capital, old women for self-focus and escape, and young women often view dance as a route to and form of aesthetic beauty and the display of an idealised self.

Observing mothers, I argued in Chapter 3, are young professional housewives and *kyōiku mama*. I demonstrated that they utilise ballet vicariously in order to provide their daughters with symbolic, cultural and physical capital because they claim that in Japan’s post-bubble era’s competitive society obtaining special skills or elegant bodies will help their daughters to be successful middle-class citizens. Therefore, observing mothers asserted their own agency through their children by willing their hopes and desires for the future onto their young ones in a form of social reproduction through their daughters. However this was not altruistic self-sacrifice or a mere tool of socialization alone. Children’s achievements are

¹ As argued through the work of several scholars (cf. Condry 2001; Tobin 1992b), I pointed out how ballet has been interwoven with Japanese practices.

related to the status of full-time housewives, and this includes the roles of daughters in the stage performance. Thus by enrolling their daughters in ballet lessons mothers tried to distinguish themselves from working-class mothers, or even others within shared field of the middle-class.

By contrast, the second category of women I discussed in Chapters 4 through 6 were practitioners who expressed their individuality through dancing ballet themselves. For these women, ballet was not solely a way to attain or maintain status because, for them, their own self-expression was an important factor in choosing to dance ballet. However, how individuality was expressed clearly differs between the older and younger generation. For example, in Chapter 4 I describe a typical ballet lesson. During lessons a hierarchy based on age was adhered to because older, middle-aged women, the majority of adult beginners, were usually dominant. They routinely occupied better positions on the dance floor or barre compared to younger women taking advantage of the accepted seniority system in order to demonstrate their dominance in the ballet studio.

In this sense, young informants were placed in a low status position inside as well as outside the ballet studio. However, by wearing toe shoes young students could try to raise their status in the ballet hierarchy. Indeed, wearing toe shoes requires mastering difficult skills and the nature of the symbolic capital linked to wearing such shoes meant that many students desired to wear them. Thus, by wearing products filled with *akogare* (toe shoes or leotards for example) younger informants could show their superior dancing ability and status over older students despite the traditional markers of age or social rank. As noted above, younger generations had more desire to express individualism, thus even if dance

ability was not a common factor in deciding one's position in the ballet hierarchy, young students tried to cultivate a skilled sense of self and vie for recognition.

Chapter 5 focused on embodiment as a dividing factor between these groups of women. This is because the majority of women were interested in bodily practices of self-cultivation or coming to know their 'self' (*jibun*). Mature women felt that they had neglected their own bodies and subjugated their own desires before beginning to dance. Therefore, drawing on Csordas' conceptualization of somatic modes of attention (1993), I argued that ballet helped my informants to become liberated from existing gender norms and express sense of self through living their *akogare* dream. Many of these elderly students became concerned with how ballet helped them to better know their bodies and selves through somatic attention. Moreover, beyond wearing toe shoes or fancy dresses, learning ballet itself was embedded in feelings or experiences of longing or *akogare* because ballet formed a part of their childhood aspirations and dreams. Thus, through dancing ballet they cultivated bodily care and embodied an idealised aesthetic. Since most of these women have had few opportunities to think about themselves during their constrained daily lives, ballet provided a special space for older students to enjoy a sense of self-focus.

On the other hand, many of my young informants aspired to cultivate their appearance working to produce an *akogare* body and self through using ballet. For many members of the younger generation bodies were regarded as manageable commodities. In particular, ballet practice was presumed by my young informants to create ideal ballerina-type bodies and they utilised dance as a tool to ostensibly develop elegant and delicate middle-class

femininity. Clearly, this was not free from expected gender roles as it partly addressed the social expectations about female bodies. Indeed the goal of obtaining idealised bodies was usually expressed through the desire to provide practitioners with improved self-confidence in having what they perceived to be an elegant body formed through ballet practices. Yet in ballet class the vast majority of dancers were women, thus this focus on aesthetics was not immediate but an accumulation of physical cum socio-cultural capital. In short, dancers did not directly need to care about what men thought. On the contrary, they gained a sense of female solidarity and empowerment while in the ballet studio.

For older informants any open admission of moving bodies as a mode of self-expression might result in being labelled selfish (*wagamama*). However, in regard to normative social roles, the maintenance of a healthy body is encouraged by the state in order for middle-aged women to be able look after the elderly. Moreover, ballet is commonly regarded as feminine form of dance, so often it is analysed by dance researchers as passive (cf. Daly 1987; discussed in Chapter 1). Therefore, middle-aged women utilised ballet to mask their desires while expressing agency within the confines of an accepted gender role. Motivations and gendered expectations were not the same for the younger generation. They desired to cultivate and display ideal self rather than concealing their aspirations. For example, through wearing cute leotards in daily lessons, or beautiful dresses and make-up during the stage performance they performed their *akogare* self. That is to say they could express what they wanted to be in their daily life outside the performance of their subordinated roles in the workplace or at home.

The focus of the final chapter was on the narratives of dancing women who desired to

assert their identity through ballet. All of my informants were bound by gender norms at workplace or home. However, young dancers negotiated with older forms of gendered norms and present tense social acceptance. They utilised ballet in order to be more focused on becoming confident women from a more neoliberal hedonistic perspective such as finding the ‘right’ husbands, enjoying attractive *jibun* or becoming the perfect *kyōiku mama*. Older generations, by contrast, felt that they were more constrained by traditional gender norms. Ballet functioned as a temporary ‘escape’ from daily burdens at home and a short liberation from their expected ‘caregiver’ gender roles. In this sense, dancing women in the ballet studio represented inter-generational changes in regard to gender norms and negotiations in what constituted an acceptable sense of self in the Japanese society.

Therefore, an important aspect of this research contributes to the study of anthropology of Japan, focusing on Japanese women’s individualism. As argued throughout this thesis, none of my informants including younger dancers were, nor could they likely ever be, completely free from ‘traditional’ values of social hierarchy or traditional gender norms in their daily domestic or public. For example, members of the older generation were expected to be indulgent to others (*amae*) at home or less often at work. In both of these areas they were also expected to endure (*gaman*) as the main or even sole care givers for children, husbands or elders. I have outlined that many of these women felt constrained even trapped by these older gender norms. Moreover, their sense of self was deeply bounded to this ideology because family members’ demands and expectations were regarded as more important than their own.

As a result of the post-war era’s hegemonic gender ideals, many scholars have pointed out

in the pre-bubble era Japanese did not have a core sense of self similar to Europeans, and notably Americans. For example there were weak notions of individuality. Such authors suggest that rather, Japanese house a situational sense of self (cf. Bachnik 1992; Kuwayama 1992; Smith 1983). In particular, much of the existing literature on Japan and gender discusses Japanese women as being highly constrained subjects (cf. Brinton 1993; Lam 1992; Saso 1990). These scholars forward stereotypical views of Japanese women as victims of a patriarchal society and constrained by gender norms such as the aforementioned *ryōsai kenbo* ideology and its inherent domestic division of unpaid and largely underappreciated labour.

However I have noted that similar to middle aged woman, young informants also appeared constrained by traditional gender ideals. For instance, unmarried young dancers held office assistant jobs as *OLs* or worked as *haken shain* and the majority of young mothers were professional housewives. Therefore, all of my young informants also reproduced subordinated gender norms at workplace and at home. Following the work of Bourdieu (1977) my informants had a *habitus* of neglect in regard to their own bodies before dancing. This is because their bodies were ‘disciplined’ by socially constructed and normative expectations (Foucault 1977). Their bodies were expected to be maintained for the male gaze, for fertility, or looking after family members such as children, husbands, or elders. As I argued, their bodies were also culturally objectified outside studio and they were expected to perform particular roles in society. For example the culturally tantamount expectation of being mothers or wives began to adversely impact young women especially in their late twenties and thirties. In particular, unmarried young informants aimed to develop socially acceptable feminine bodies. However, this does not completely conform to hegemonic

gender ideals, it is more about benefits or opportunities for them to gain what they perceived to be the kind of bodies required to find good middle-class jobs or desirable middle-class husbands in the competitive post-bubble era.

Nevertheless, while there are similarities across the ballet cohort, I have argued that the Japanese female dancers I studied were not one homogeneous group. All were individuals who expressed different aims or dreams, and who were unsatisfied with the popularly accepted hegemony of gender ideals. However, in daily life both generations were able to fit into socio-cultural discourses and expectations. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1971[1959]) Goffman describes a model of the theatre or theatrical performance as a means of analysing how people develop and present themselves to others. Similar to the way Csordas' concept of somatic modes of attention includes the reflection of other bodies, Goffman explains that individuals consciously perform for purposes of self-interest or personal gain through the interaction between self and others. Indeed, my informants could not resist hegemonic gender ideals directly and as Butler (1988, 1993) argues in a Euro-American context, they 'performed' their expected gender roles in order to be accepted by Japanese society. Similarly, in the case of Japan Martinez points out that in reality women cannot naturally "become" (*naru*) persons such as good mothers, wives or good partners for men or for children without "making" (*tsukuru*) efforts. A sense of self is socially created by society not only in Japan but in globe including USA where selfhood is commonly regarded as unitary (2004: 167, 202-207). However, through dancing ballet my informants could 'perform' or 'make' an idealised self which they could not achieve daily life.

Therefore, the stage performance outlined in ethnographic detail from chapter 3 and 5 is a

contribution to the ongoing debates of gender, performance, and an embodied sense of selfhood in action. In Japan, not only small children, but also adult beginners including middle-aged women have the opportunity to dance ballet on stage because most dance studios organise and ask students to participate in a stage performance once or twice a year. As an experienced ballet dancer, I suggest that the stage performance was about showing off not just dance ability but also women themselves. The way women utilised the stage performance represented their desires and hopes beyond their mundane lives. Through stage performance both old and young students tried to assert a sense of alternate selfhood. Ortner (2006) argues that even subtle subordination plays a part in an individual's engagement in "serious games". People have their own desires that grow out of the structures that surround their daily life beyond the determinative or structuring expectations of society. In line with the arguments of Mathews (1996) and Ortner (*ibid.*), therefore, in this thesis I have explored how within the confines of accepted gender roles women intentionally utilised ballet in order to assert their individual identity. However, I have also made clear that the way of expressing liberation differed depending on generation because of the influence of individuality among young people in the post-bubble era.

For example, the young mothers of small children in chapter 3 were more enthusiastic about the public performance than their children were. Ballet mothers' absorption in their children's affairs was not solely for their children's benefit but also, maybe even more so, for their own. This is because their children's achievements can be seen to reflect their own social status. Therefore, some mothers felt that they were able to acquire higher status than others at the ballet studio if their daughters were allotted better roles in the stage performance or were seen to be superior dancers. In fact, one informant said that in some

ballet studios the hierarchy of mothers' status roles was determined by their daughters' dancing ability. Moreover, I noticed that one essential situation in regard to the stage performance had changed from when I was dancing in the 1970s to 1990s. In the past, there were few mothers who dressed up on the day of stage performance and seeing other invited family members at these events was rare. However, nowadays, as evidenced by the large presence of even extended family in the crowd and the impeccable clothing worn, it is clear that these performances are used as a sign, a distinction, of middle-class status. In fact, although it is less expensive than before, these performances still cost approximately 30,000 to 50,000 yen (£125 to £208) on top of the monthly fees, as pointed out in Chapter 3. *Kyōiku mama* tried to distinguish themselves from other middle-class mothers within their shared socio-cultural-economic field through utilising the stage performance. In sum, these ballet mums treated the stage performances not only as their children's events but also their own events whereby they could display their family wealth and status, flaunting their economic and cultural capital.

In the case of adult beginners, they were absorbed in the stage performance. Certainly, in Europe it is far more unusual for adult beginners to dance ballet on the stage, let alone wear toe shoes, compared to Japan (Sasagawa and Ikeda 2002). Although there are some dance classes for adult beginners, students over 40 would not commonly participate in lessons with the exception of a few studios such as Northern Ballet or Janine Stanlowa.² Ballet is usually associated with youth and beauty and therefore, in most professional ballet companies including Japanese ones, the lion's share of dancers retire in their 40s, apart

² Northern Ballet is located in Leeds and has a specific class for students over 55 (<http://northernballet.com>, accessed January 2015). Janine Stanlowa is located in Paris (<http://www.institut-stanlowa.com>, accessed January 2015).

from a few exceptions.³ At the Paris Opera Ballet Company, for example, ballerinas retire at age 40 and male dancers at 45. As a result, several professional dancers featured in a 2003 documentary titled *Etoiles: Dancers of the Paris Opera Ballet* claimed that it was a shame that their maturity and the physical demands of their roles cannot be balanced. By the time they really start understanding their stage roles, they cannot jump as high as audiences expect. In Europe these expectations of both youth and beauty affect even amateur ballet dancers to some degree, thus it is unusual for them to be involved in stage performances.

In Japan, the stage performance was enjoyed by anyone including middle-aged adult beginners who cannot represent youth and beauty. This was indeed the case at least in the three ballet studios where I conducted fieldwork. The way of involving a stage performance was different depending on the generations even among adult beginners. For example, older generations were absorbed by practice for the stage performance in order to improve their ballet techniques or cultivate their bodies and self. They considered the practice as another opportunity to focus on themselves. Even in the pre-bubble era some scholars have disagreed with the stereotypical portrayal of passive Japanese women outlined above (cf. Allison 1994; Clammer 1997; Hendry 1993a; Iwao 1993; Kondo 1990; Lebra 1984). They explain, for instance, how Japanese housewives or *part-timers* who are generally considered as ‘constrained’ by older gender norms actually control husbands or their male full-time co-workers and empower themselves through finding ‘fulfilment’ in the role of domestic managers or caregivers. In other words, older generations have a desire to express

³ For example, the NDT (Netherlands Dance Theatre) had three different divisions depending on age; the NDTIII was for dancers 40 years and older. However, in 2006 the company decided the NDTIII would not be continued (<http://www.ndt.nl>, accessed January 2015).

their sense of self, but at the same time they have tendencies to conform to (and may not have a strong urge to subvert) hegemonic gender ideals which has expected women to care about others rather than themselves.

Indeed, my older informants felt embarrassed to be on the stage because it is against what is expected by well-mannered middle-class women. Since dance for self-expression could be labelled *wagamama*, it follows that dance in the public while donning stage dresses and makeup, risked being labelled *wagamama* by audiences. Therefore they were reluctant to participate in the stage performance unlike younger students who enjoyed actually being on the stage and displaying confidence in their self. Indeed, they were more interested in practice for the stage performance to cultivate their bodies and self rather than perceived by others in actual stage. For older women dancing ballet in the studio and during stage performance practice was a place to escape from hegemonic gender ideals and focus on themselves.⁴

By contrast, younger students focused on more of a neo-liberal type of individualism and utilised the stage performance for personal benefits or to display an idealised self. As I have outlined, several scholars who have focused on contemporary shifts in Japanese society suggest that in the post-bubble era young women have shown more individualism, and their power is no longer to be found within the domestic sphere alone. For example and in particular, the importance of hegemonic masculine and feminine ideals have resulted in the placement of less emphasis by younger generations (cf. Ehara 2004; Fukasawa 2009;

⁴ Indeed, Hardacre (1986) argues that in 1980s a new religion, *kurozumikyō*, was widespread especially among women because it allows for individuals to shift from focus on a self in relation to others or community to a focus on the self.

Shirahase 2005). As in many areas of the Global North, young people express more neoliberal and globalised perspectives. Thus a highly individualised sense of self, along with the desire for and expectations of freedom and independence, are qualities cultivated among today's young Japanese, and notably many young women (cf. Cave 2007; Kosugi 2003). Young people's more relaxed or rebellious perspectives towards dominant gender ideals can be recognised, for example, through the increasing number of people working, and happy to work, as *freeters* or young men and women choosing to delay or deny what was once perhaps the pinnacle of social expectation, marriage and reproduction.

In the case of my young informants, they were trapped in a 'dilemma' between old and new ideals (cf. Rosenberger 2013), but tried to display more globalised individualised senses of self with ballet practice rather than older informants who conform to 'traditional' gender norms. As noted above, young women had more practical perspectives towards hegemonic gender ideals. For example, they cultivated a feminine appearance and in part this was to find suitable or desired marriage partners. Thus young women might appear to be consistent with older gender norms. However, at the same time they were not rushing into marital or parental relations. Many were in a position to buy time resident with parents and living of *OL* wages. They desired to remain single until finding suitable husbands who let them continue working after marriage and having children. Therefore, ballet provided them more than a hobby, more than a way to cultivate an appearance, ostensibly it availed them with more opportunities for their dreams to be a success.

Indeed, according to young dancing informants, they enjoyed being on the stage unlike older women who felt embarrassed. In particular, wearing stage dresses and makeup played

an important role in helping young students become ‘different’ and ‘special’ people. On the stage they could be outside of their expected social or age role for example. As noted above, Goffman (1971[1959]) argues that individuals manage their impressions for personal purposes. As a result, people tend to present themselves as a little better, usually “a higher class status” than their actual selves (Goffman *ibid.*: 47).⁵ In response to this ‘presentation’, according to Goffman, an audience is implicitly requested by players “to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them” (*ibid.*: 28).

Similar to the members of the older generation, my young informants also ‘performed’ their expected gender roles in daily life. However, in the stage performance these women can quite literally step outside of this and comfortably and acceptably be the centre of attention. Audiences are asked to watch them, be impressed, and clap regardless of performers’ ability. Therefore, young students performed or attempted to display their idealised (*akogare*) roles or express the self that they wanted to be in their daily life through wearing dresses and makeup. In sum, they were ‘socially and safely’ resisting the expected performance of gender roles imposed upon them by Japanese society. The final performance represents females’ wishes, dreams, and desires inside and outside Japanese society; specifically those women who were able to discover their own bodies, voice and agency through ballet.

This new consumption pattern, which enables Japanese women to use *okeikogoto* as a space for self-expression is opposed to spending time engaged in activities conducive to supporting the traditional stereotypical roles of self-sacrifice and devotion to others. In

⁵ Rapport even argues that individuals aspire to be different or beyond themselves in putting their bodies in the “new situations” or “by acting with bodies of others” (2005: 8).

particular young women expressed their individualism in more neoliberal ways compared to older generations through their participation / consumption of embodied activities. My study worked towards filling this vacuum by highlighting this emerging pattern of self-expression through ballet among middle-class women in Japanese society.

In sum, this research has addressed why and how Japanese women who have been commonly regarded as submissive and lacking of sense of self have utilised ballet which is usually perceived as a disciplined feminised form of dance, to express their sense of self through their own embodied activity or through their children. The majority of dance researchers and dance anthropologists describe ballerinas as victims of patriarchal norms (cf. Daly 1987) or as disciplined bodies (cf. Hanna 1988), thus these scholars argue that the performance of ballet involves a lack of agency, specifically in terms of resistance to gendered expectations. However, my research underscores that ballet is used by dancers to both construct and represent their self-identity. This thesis has focused on amateurs in particular. These women did not consider dancing to be oppressive. They viewed ballet in positive terms. For example, through ballet older students tried to extricate themselves from their subordinate position by consuming cultural products that they had felt *akogare* for in their childhood. Young adult students expressed perspectives that were betwixt and between – to borrow from Victor Turner’s language of liminality (1967) – neoliberal practical pursuits and conservative values. Students attempted to become attractive selves through cultivating appearances, wearing toe shoes, cute leotards, stage-dress or make-up. In this way, young students hoped for the conquest of a suitable and sustaining husband. Moreover, young students believed that ballet, and it is perceived high culture western aesthetic provided them with a cosmopolitan image of a confident middle-class self and

body. Ballet was chosen over other forms of dance because it was pursued in an environment devoid of overt sexuality – an elegant female world my informants believed wherein they were admired by both men and women outside of the studios.

In this regard, further research into the relationship shared between daughters and young mothers would help to explore the role of ballet as a mode of socio-cultural reproduction in the post-bubble era. Moreover, women who practise other forms of dance popularly regarded as less passive such as hip-hop, belly or jazz in the context of Japan (cf. Sasagawa and Ikeda 2002), might help to extend an understanding of how Japanese women, young and old, show their hedonistic individualism through hobbies. For example, while I was conducting research on ballet I enrolled in a belly dancing class for my own enjoyment and to escape from the rigors of fieldwork. Similar to ballet, through belly dancing older women tended to be at the top of the class hierarchies by occupying the best spots on the dance floor while younger women thrived off of the stage performance, but unlike ballet informants who fancied the elegant stage-dress or movements they showed off their bodies with skimpy tops or suggestive gestures. Even backstage some young women did not worry about being subject to the male gaze. On one occasion members of a middle-aged male ballroom dancer group asked us to practise without wearing any covering outfits.⁶ During my fieldwork in ballet studios, I had never observed sexualised requests from men but from the start men were forbidden to enter the female backstage. In Japan belly dancing was considered by both men and women to be less ‘conservative’ than ballet although the relationship between sexuality and ballet is pointed out by several western scholars (cf.

⁶ This stage performance was organised by local culture centre in my home town, *ōimachi*, thus members of other forms of dance such as ballroom, flamenco, or cheerleading joined in it.

Daly 1986; Hanna 1988). In short, there is much room for comparative research focused on dance and female gender roles and expectations in Japan. On the other hand, research into the motivations and experiences of male dancers would surely raise new insights in these areas. Much like the case of their female counterparts, there is little research on male ballet dancers in Japan. However, the growing popularity among male dance practitioners has been reported in Japan as well as in other parts of the globe, as noted in introductory chapter. Even during my fieldwork, I saw a few men in ballet studios. Japanese men are often viewed as dominant in terms of gender roles such as being a family's core breadwinner, but as noted in this thesis, many young men resist hegemonic masculinity through becoming *freeters* or *sōshoku danshi*. Therefore, research into the lives, narratives, and motivations of male dancers may show the role of ballet as gender liberation from the perspective of both sexes.

Whether observing mothers or dance practitioners, women consume and utilise ballet not only for their children or personal enjoyment respectively but as a strategy to assert their own agency. Whether they are donning much-dreamed-of toe shoes themselves or vicariously experiencing dance through their children, these Japanese ballet women reveal a yearning for liberation and independence. An anthropological exploration of their lives not only reveals their covert desires or neoliberal expressions of individualism, but also sheds light on societal norms, gender roles and expectations within Japanese culture and society. The ballet studio offers the perfect space for female desires to be released and show hedonistic perspectives in an otherwise hegemonic traditional gender ideal dominated culture and society.

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Appendix I: Glossary of Ballet terms

I used the website of the American Ballet Theatre (<http://www.abt.org/education/dictionary/index.html>) in order to explain the ballet terms in English;

<i>assemble</i>	the working foot slides well along the ground before being swept into the air and as the foot goes into the air the dancer pushes off the floor with the supporting leg. Both legs come to the ground simultaneously in the fifth position.
<i>battement fondu développé</i>	the supporting leg is slowly bent in fondu (sinking down) with the working foot pointing at the ankle. As the supporting leg is straightened, the working leg unfolds and is extended to point on the floor or in the air.
<i>battement jeté</i>	similar to the battement tendu but is done at twice the speed and the working foot rises about four inches from the floor with a well-pointed toe, then slides back into the first or fifth position.
<i>battement tendu</i>	the working foot slides from the first or fifth position to the second or fourth position without lifting the toe from the ground.
<i>croisé</i>	crossed
<i>changements</i>	springing steps in the fifth position where the dancer changes their feet in the air and alighting in the fifth position with the opposite foot in front.
<i>développé</i>	the working leg is drawn up to the knee of the supporting leg and slowly extended to an open position in the air and held there with perfect control.
<i>échappé sauté</i>	a spring from the fifth position and finishes in a demi-plié in the open position.

<i>épaulement</i>	a movement of the torso from the waist upward, bringing one shoulder forward and the other back with the head turned or inclined over the forward shoulder.
<i>fouettes</i>	a short whipped movement of the raised foot as it passes rapidly in front of or behind the supporting foot.
<i>grands battements</i>	an exercise in which the working leg is raised from the hip into the air and brought down again.
<i>grande jeté</i>	the legs are simultaneously lifted to 90 degrees with a corresponding high jump.
<i>jeté</i>	a jump from one foot to the other in which the working leg is brushed into the air and appears to have been thrown.
<i>jeté entrelacé</i>	this jeté is done in all directions and in a circle.
<i>plie</i>	a bending of the knees.
<i>rond de jambe</i>	turn of the leg, that is, a circular movement of the leg.

Appendix II: Glossary of Japanese terms

<i>akogare</i>	a longing for something, desirable
<i>amaeru</i>	indulgence or dependency
<i>arubaito</i>	side [part-time] job
<i>biyō to kenkō</i>	beauty and health
<i>bunmei kaika</i>	civilization and enlightenment
<i>daigaku</i>	university
<i>dankai sedai</i>	post-war baby boom generation
<i>dōzo osakini</i>	please go ahead
<i>eikaiwa</i>	English conversation
<i>electone</i>	electric piano
<i>esukareitā shiki no gakkō</i>	escalator schools
<i>fukoku kyōhei</i>	a rich country and a strong military
<i>fuzokukō</i>	schools affiliated with universities
<i>gakushū-shi</i>	educational magazines
<i>gaman</i>	endure
<i>genjitsu tōhi</i>	an escape from reality
<i>gōdō-reنشū</i>	practise together
<i>habatsu</i>	cliques

<i>haken shain</i>	a temporary worker
<i>hanayome shugyō</i>	bridal training
<i>hayaimono gachi</i>	first-come, first-served
<i>hoikuen</i>	a type of nursery school that accepts children from birth or 1 year old to 6.
<i>honne</i>	spontaneous and real feelings
<i>ichininmae</i>	adult, grown up
<i>ie</i>	household
<i>ikumen</i>	husbands who are cooperative with household work and childrearing
<i>ippanshoku</i>	general track
<i>iyasareru</i>	healing
<i>jibun</i>	self
<i>jikobōei</i>	protect oneself
<i>jiritsu</i>	independent
<i>juku</i>	a cram school
<i>kadō</i>	flower arranging
<i>kaigo</i>	elder care
<i>kakkoii</i>	cool
<i>kandōsuru</i>	impress
<i>karada</i>	body
<i>karada de wakaru</i>	understanding one's own body
<i>karisuma shufu</i>	charisma housewife
<i>kawaii</i>	cute

<i>kibun tenkan</i>	become refreshed
<i>kigyō senshi</i>	company warriors
<i>kinjozukiai</i>	affinity with neighbours
<i>kitsui</i>	severe, intense, hard
<i>kōhai</i>	junior
<i>kokoro</i>	mind and soul
<i>kōnenki shōgai</i>	menopausal disorder
<i>konshinkai</i>	a convivial meeting
<i>koseiteki</i>	individualistic
<i>kosu-pure</i>	costume play
<i>kotobuki taisha</i>	leaving a company job because of marriage
<i>kyasha</i>	delicate
<i>kyōiku mama</i>	education mother
 <i>madogiwa zoku</i>	 workers who are expected to leave companies before reaching retirement age
<i>manga</i>	comic books
<i>mittomonai</i>	disgraceful or shameful
<i>mottainai</i>	a wasted opportunity
 <i>nihon buyō</i>	 Japanese traditional dance
<i>nyūkaikin</i>	entrance fee
 <i>ohayō gozaimasu</i>	 good morning
<i>ojō-san</i>	young ladies
<i>ojuken</i>	entrance examinations

<i>okeikogoto</i>	after-school or extra-curricular activities for children, hobbies for adults
<i>OL</i>	office ladies
<i>omote</i>	exposed to public attention
<i>oshare mama</i>	fashionable mother
<i>pāto</i>	part-time worker
<i>rajio taisō</i>	radio exercises
<i>ryōsai kenbo</i>	good wife, wise mother ideology
<i>ryūkōgo</i>	popular words
<i>sadō</i>	tea ceremony
<i>sansai shinwa</i>	the myth of three years old
<i>senjyō shufu</i>	full-time (professional) housewife
<i>seiza</i>	sitting on bended knees
<i>senpai</i>	senior
<i>sensei</i>	teacher
<i>shikata ga nai</i>	nothing can be done, it cannot be helped
<i>shinsotsu</i>	a student who has just left education
<i>shokugyō fujin</i>	working women in the pre-war era
<i>shūdan kōdō</i>	a group activity
<i>shūdan shugi</i>	groupism
<i>shūji</i>	Japanese calligraphy
<i>sōgōshoku</i>	executive truck
<i>sokomade shinakutemo</i>	I do not need to force myself [make such an effort] to do it
<i>sōshokukei-danshi</i>	herbivore men

<i>soto</i>	outside
<i>sutairu ga yoi</i>	good proportions
<i>tandai</i>	junior college
<i>tatemaie</i>	maintaining formalized appearances
<i>tenkin</i>	be transferred for the jobs
<i>uchi</i>	inside
<i>ura</i>	hidden from public eye
<i>wagamama</i>	selfish
<i>yarigai</i>	self-satisfaction
<i>yawarakai karada</i>	a flexible body
<i>yobikō</i>	a cram school to pass university entrance exams
<i>yōchien</i>	a type of nursery school that accepts children from aged 3 or 4 to 6
<i>yome</i>	daughter-in-law
<i>zense</i>	a previous incarnation